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THE EFFECT OF AFFECTIVE POLARIZATION AND PARTISAN AFFECT ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the effect of affective polarization on political participation by analyzing the most recent available dataset of American National Election Studies from the 2020 U.S. Presidential Elections. While scarce research on the topic showed the positive effect of affective polarization on turnout, what has not yet been explored is whether dimensions of affective polarization – namely in-party and out-party affect – contribute to the effect evenly or one is more dominant than the other. Moreover, previous studies have operationalized political participation by turnout, not taking forms of non-voting participation into account. Hence, to address these gaps, this thesis employs statistical analysis to assess affective polarization's effect on both voting and non-voting participation and to compare the strength of in-party and out-party affect's effects. Results of binominal logistic and ordered logit regression modeling confirm that while affective polarization is positively associated with participation and both dimensions contribute to this effect, out-party evaluation has a stronger effect and higher explanatory power. The empirical analysis reveals that one unit decrease in out-party affect has four times larger effect on voting and five times larger effect on non-voting participation than a corresponding increase in in-party affect. This disparity indicates that the effect of affective polarization on participation is more driven by out-party affect. Therefore, the study contributes to the existing literature by pointing out that affective polarization's affiliation to participation is dependent not only on the difference, but also on the actual value of in-party and out-party affect and suggests directions for further research.

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INTRODUCTION

Nothing illustrates better how divided American society is than the recent 2020 Presidential Elections. However, it is not only the small margin of victory, the divide across blue and red states, or even the violent riots that demonstrate this division. As American National Election Studies (ANES) (2019, 2021) data shows, affective polarization has reached its all-time high, while value of negative evaluations of the opposing party have never been this low. Although it has become a trite commonsense to claim that America is divided, literature on polarization still holds plenty of unexplored questions. While most research focused on affective polarization's antecedents, these recent developments – and the lack of scholarly attention – underline the importance of researching its consequences.

One field at the heart of voting behavior research which has not been satisfactorily explored is affective polarization's relationship to political participation. While recent research shows that affective polarization is positively associated with turnout (Harteveld and Wagner forthcoming; Ward and Tavits 2019), these inquiries fail to address its effect on other forms of political participation – such as donation to a party, wearing campaign merchandise, or protesting – which are equally important participatory channels through which citizens can actively express their opinions and identities and seek to change political outcomes. In addition, from a scholarly perspective, the inclusion of non-voting participation in the analysis expands the theoretical scope and adds validity to findings.

Furthermore, the two concepts' relationship can be explicated even further. Although we see partial evidence that affective polarization is positively associated with participation, what remains unanswered is whether this effect is more driven by citizens' love towards their own party or by their hate towards the other party (in more technical terms, in-party and out-party affect). Since affective

polarization only accounts for the absolute difference of in-party and out-party affect – namely, how far these evaluations are from each other – and disregards the actual values of affect, the possibility that the effect of affective polarization on participation is dependent on partisan affect's values calls for further research. Although it was shown by Iyengar and Krupenkin (2018) that partisan affect has an asymmetric effect on participation, the asymmetry concerning affective polarization has not yet been explored.

Moreover, the question whether out-party or in-party affect is more dominant also points to a theoretical puzzle. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel et al. 1979) provides a theoretical explanation of the motivational importance of affective polarization by pointing out that in an inter-group conflict both in-group favoritism and out-group animosity are important factors. Yet, it does not theorize which of these dimensions has stronger motivational importance. While it is a mundane possibility that in-group affect induces participation, it is equally possible that negative out-party affect motivates individuals to participate in order to avoid possible losses. Though these ideal-typical possibilities are not exclusive, one's superiority would indicate that the way scholars have looked at affective polarization should be reconsidered, since dimensions' weight also matters.

Therefore, existing research on affective polarization in political science leaves three major questions unanswered. Firstly, what is the effect of affective polarization on political participation, including both voting and non-voting participation? Secondly, do in-party and out-party affects contribute to this effect and what is the direction of these relationships? Thirdly, how does the strength of the in-party affect compare to that of the out-party affect?

This thesis seeks to answer the questions above by exploring the case of the 2020 Presidential Election in the United States. While the two-party system is the most obvious case since it is theoretically unambiguous in terms of identifying the in-party and the out-party, it can also serve as a stable setting with little variation in the political setting to disentangle these effects. Following the

scholarly tradition (for review see Iyengar et al. 2019) of analyzing data from the United States – and expanding the temporal scope to 2020 – also has the benefit of comparability of results.

In particular, the thesis employs a quantitative analysis utilizing the most recent ANES dataset. Firstly, to show the overall trends, I analyze the recent changes in affective polarization and partisan affect of the American electorate. Secondly, to test affective polarization's effect on both voting and non-voting participation, I build binomial logistic and ordered logit regression models. Thirdly, to see whether their contributions are indeed pointing in the direction as hypothesized and whether their respective strength and explanatory power differ, I employ the same modelling techniques to compare the effects of in-party and out-party affect.

This thesis claims that affective polarization positively correlates with participation, but due to the dominance of out-party affect, this effect is unevenly dependent on the values of in-party and out-party affect. However, the widely used conceptualization of affective polarization only accounts for the distance of these values and disregards the weights of these dimensions, missing and important feature of how partisan affect affects participation. Therefore, this research contributes to the scholarly debate on polarization by presenting results based on the most recent developments concerning its consequences on voting behavior and showing the implications of dimensions' asymmetric strength on affective polarizations' effect. Furthermore, this thesis has indirect implications on negative campaigning and negative partisanship literature, and more broadly on voting behavior research, elections, and democracy.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. The first chapter presents a thorough overview of the literature on the topic, establishes the theoretical framework, and conceptualizes both affective polarization and political participation. The second chapter outlines the research design stating the testable hypotheses, describing the data and operationalization of the variables, and justifying the research methodology. The third chapter unfolds the statistical analysis, where first I present temporal

trends in changes of the variables and show independent variables' distributions based on the recent data. Consequently, the main effect of affective polarization on participation is demonstrated, which is followed by testing its dimensions' effects separately and conjointly. The analysis chapter is concluded by the discussion of the results. The final chapter of the thesis briefly outlines and contextualizes the findings and points at possibilities for further research.

CHAPTER 1: THEORY AND CONCEPTS

The following chapter presents the state of the art in literature, defines key concepts, identifies the theoretical approach, and points out the areas of research this thesis addresses. Firstly, I situate the problem in the theoretical space and conceptualize affective polarization. To construct the theoretical framework, I rely on Social Identity Theory (SIT), which explains how group identification can create a stark contrast between the antagonistic in-group and out-group, leading to polarized group-evaluations. After applying SIT to the political domain, I explore the relationship of its dimensions, namely in-group and out-group affect, presenting theoretical expectations concerning their asymmetric affiliation. Secondly, I present the concept of political participation, and argue that both of its two dimensions – voting and non-voting participation – should be included in the analysis to strengthen results' validity. Next, I thoroughly examine the literature which connects affective polarization and participation, presenting both the mobilization and the demobilization hypothesis. Finally, I demonstrate the puzzle of the thesis, and theoretically describe the negativity hypothesis – arguing that negative out-party affect is more dominant – and the positivity hypotheses – according to which in-party affect is the driving force of participation – and conclude by identifying the gaps that this thesis addresses.

1.1.   Political Polarization: Elites, Parties, and the Public

The polarized nature of American politics is more and more emphasized by pundits who point at the seemingly unbridgeable chasm between Democrats and Republicans, as well as politicians who either point fingers at the other side or try to gain support by calling for bipartisanship. Nevertheless, when it comes to scientific debate, there is no univocally accepted definition, conceptualization, or

measurement of polarization, leading to conflicting results concerning the extent – or existence – of polarization. Thus, to situate affective polarization in the wide literature of polarization, this section firstly identifies different fields of polarization literature, secondly, defines and conceptualizes public polarization, and thirdly, distinguishes affective polarization from other forms of public polarization.

Literature generally refers to many different concepts under the term political polarization. While most studies focus on supply-side polarization, such as polarization of parties (Carson et al. 2007; Jacobson 2000; Layman, Carsey, and Horowitz 2006; Lupu 2015) and elites (Hetherington 2008; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2008), others examine the demand-side, namely the public's stance on ideological issues and policy preferences (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Fiorina and Abrams 2008; West and Iyengar 2020), as well as citizens' affective in-group and out-group identification (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Reiljan 2020).

Although these conceptualizations of polarization are largely different, they are not independent of each other. On the electoral market where supply and demand are interconnected (Norris 2005), polarized elites and parties can have an influence on the electorate's ideological and affective polarization and vice versa. To examine polarization's effect on electoral behavior, these approaches – in accordance with the literature's tradition – ought to be theoretically separated. Consequently, this thesis limits itself to the analysis of public polarization, which by itself holds many conceptual and empirical debates. After defining and conceptualizing public polarization, these debates are addressed in the next section.

1.1.1. Public Polarization: Policy, Ideology, and Affect

Public polarization is defined as a "clustering within the society that divides the population into sizeable groups on opposite sides" (Reiljan 2020, 377), which results in a degree of animosity between parties (Iyengar et al. 2019). This rather broad definition emphasizes polarization's distributional

nature and gives leeway to scholars to conceptualize polarization in multiple ways. Reflecting on the definition of polarization, Fiorina and Abrams (2008) remark that "most scholars hold an intuitive notion of polarization as a bimodal distribution of observations" (2008, 566).

This may be an oversimplified definition for not providing an explicit answer for two indispensable questions: firstly, whether bimodality is only a necessary or a sufficient condition, and secondly, whether polarization is a level or a trend, or – as DiMaggio, Evans, and Bryson (1996) and Lelkes (2016) typologized – a state or a process. To elaborate on the former critique, for a distribution to be considered polarized, it must be bimodal (thus, it is a necessary condition). However, by itself, a bimodal distribution would not be called polarized unless the two modes are closer to the poles than to the center (thus, it is not sufficient). Addressing the latter reservation, Fiorina and Abrams (2008) claim that looking at polarization as a level would inevitably subjugate the decision to personal judgment, while looking at it as a trend would have the affordance of considering distributions from a comparative angle, which leaves much less room for dispute.

Although the aforementioned objections point at essential features of the systematized conceptual view of polarization, these issues can be resolved by looking at polarization not as a binary concept but as an interval-scale, where the level of polarization is a matter of degree. This solution may face challenges in multiparty systems where the degree of bimodality and parties' respective positions must be aggregated into one metric. Nevertheless, this parsimonious approach is applicable in a two-party system like the of the US, since in two-party systems public attitudes towards parties are inherently bimodal, which satisfies that necessary condition. Therefore, the degree of polarization can be assessed based on the other condition, namely the difference of these two values on a given spectrum, with which they are jointly sufficient.

Adopting this view still leaves one major feature of the definition unspecified: it remains unclear what is the essence of the dividing cleavage. The umbrella term of public polarization is used to

describe a set of different phenomena, namely polarization based on policy preferences, ideology, and affective evaluations. This distinction is not operational but denotes distinct concepts, fueling the greatest debate in the literature concerning whether the American public's polarization is only a myth – as proclaimed by Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope (2006).

While there are still fierce debates, one of the conclusions is that the answer whether polarization took place depends which type of public polarization we are talking about. Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope (2006) convincingly show that, since there is no substantive change in policy positions or ideological distribution of citizens since the 1970s, ideological polarization of the public is not discernible. They claim, however, that partisan sorting is observable which may explain the lack of swing voters (Gelman et al. 2016), but it is not evidence of ideological polarization per se (Fiorina and Abrams 2008). In opposition to these claims, Abramowitz and Saunders (2008), based on their aggregated scale of policy and ideological positions, show that ideological mass-polarization has dramatically increased. Their results' validity is questioned by Fiorina and Abrams (2008), claiming that the presented evidence is distorted and is only a product of heavy aggregations.

Yet, an alternative theory which has reframed the polarization debate was offered by Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes (2012), whose core argument is that an "alternative (…) indicator of mass polarization is the extent to which partisans view each other as a disliked outgroup" (2012, 406). Referring to Social Identity Theory, which had a significant influence on social psychology, Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes (2012) theorize that since party identification is a form of group affiliation which is primarily affective, polarization should also be understood not on ideological but on affective terms. Their descriptive results show that – despite that ideological polarization has not changed substantively – affective polarization took place in the US. Thus, American society is affectively polarized with no corresponding change in policy or ideological positions.

To further demonstrate the viability of their theory, Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes (2012) show that affective polarization is not a symptom or a spillover from ideology or policy preferences. Their evidence indicates that "partisan affect is inconsistently related to policy preferences and that the relationship between partisan affect and policy attitudes hasn't notably strengthened over time" (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012, 406), which opens up a domain of research on its own right which is centered around citizen's affect towards relevant political entities. This approach is linked to the ideological and policy polarization literature, but since affective affiliations are not closely related to ideology and policy polarization (Abramowitz 2013), a distinct scholarly tradition has emerged, which examines the antecedents – and sometimes consequences – of the affective divide.

This section outlined areas of public polarization research and argued that affective polarization is a distinct phenomenon from other forms of public polarization. As Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes (2012) argue, since belonging to partisan identification is primarily affective, polarization should also be based on affect.

1.2. Affective Polarization

After briefly overviewing the polarization literature and demonstrating the relative relevance of affective polarization, this section constructs the theoretical background of the thesis. Considering the debate over ideological versus affective grounds of polarization and findings on partisan sorting, it is apparent that these concepts are founded in individuals' social identities and partisan attitudes. This section explores why treating group identification as affective is warranted. Thus, to augment existing theoretical arguments, I first present literature from political psychology, which demonstrates the importance of affect in identity formation and decision-making. Secondly, I demonstrate the relation of group conflict, partisanship, and social identity to affective polarization and present the corresponding evidence of this approach. Thirdly, to put the crux of this thesis into the spotlight, I

describe the asymmetry of affective polarization's dimensions and conclude by identifying gaps in the existing literature on the topic.

1.2.1. Affect and Political Psychology

The belief that certain aspects of political behavior are affective is present since the birth of voting behavior research. Nevertheless, to explicitly define what "affect" is, this section introduces its conceptualization in political psychology and connects it to the concept of affective polarization.

The concept of affect is primarily used in the domain of psychology, where affect is construed by scholars as an evaluation (Forgas 1991), or alternatively as a summary judgment (Glaser and Salovey 1998, 157) which is related to "emotional responses and feelings engendered by an attitude object" (Breckler and Wiggins 1989, 253). Correspondingly, in a more recent publication that reviews the state of political psychology, Mutz asserts that "affect often is used to describe whether an individual likes or dislikes some political object, or whether it is positively or negatively valenced" (Mutz 2013, 2), where valence stands for "the positive versus negative value of affect" (Lerner et al. 2015, 803). This view of affect is in alignment with the scholarly tradition of online-processing (McGraw, Lodge, and Stroh 1990) – also referred to as 'hot cognition' (Lodge and Taber 2007) – which looks at affect as "a summary judgment stored in memory" (Marcus 2000, 228). Thus, affect can be seen as a singular valence assessment.

Although some criticize the valence-based approach as it is not suitable to validly describe complex emotional experiences (Lerner et al. 2015; Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000), it is sufficient – and is widely used by political scientists – to gauge the aggregate affect towards an entity. Demonstrating the affect-model's applicability to political settings, Lodge and Taber (2005) show that the same valenced evaluation – which is affectively positive or negative – exists towards sociopolitical

concepts such as groups, leaders, or even issues. Therefore, this thesis adopts the conceptual definition which looks at affect as a valenced summary judgment.

Although these claims have opened new domains for research, the affective nature of politics has a long tradition in the literature; it can be traced back to Converse (1964), who claimed that most partisans do not think of parties in ideological but in affective terms. Similarly, focusing on individual-level voting choices, Campbell et al. (1960) describe partisanship as an affective relation that has a direction and a degree of intensity. Thus, they assert that the "popular image of parties and candidates is not neutral, and the fact that it is colored by positive and negative feeling vests it with great motivational importance" (1960, 40), which perfectly aligns with the conceptual understanding of affect and valence elaborated above.

Thus, evaluations of political actors and groups can be understood on an affective ground, which takes us a step closer to understanding the roots of affective polarization. However, what remains unexplained are the dynamics of polarization. In other words, although citizens affectively evaluate political candidates and parties, why do citizens have polarized affect towards them? One prominent – and widely used explanation – is offered by Social Identity Theory, which – amalgamated with the affective quality of party attachment – can theoretically illuminate features of affective polarization, and, thus, serves as the backbone of the theoretical framework of this thesis. The next section introduces this framework, which is followed by the discussion of why this framework is applicable to this context.

1.2.2. Social Identity Theory: Social-Psychology of Group-Polarization

Social Identity Theory's (SIT) central claim is that inter-group behavior and group-conflict can be explained via the fact that individuals' group membership serves as a social identity, constituting an extensive part of their self-perception, which has immense motivational importance. Tajfel defined

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social identity as "[an] individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership" (1972, 292). This definition is in alignment with the core premise of SIT: "in *relevant* group situations, individuals will not interact *as* individuals, on the basis of their individual characteristics or inter-personal relationships, but as members of their groups standing in certain defined relationships to members of other groups" (highlight in original, Tajfel et al. 1979, 34). Therefore, social identity has many functions; it "prescribes and evaluates who they are, what they should believe and how they should behave" (Hogg 2016, 6) in relation to the out-group.

This social identity which stems from group-membership, however, has great motivational importance in inter-group conflicts, and is the root of diverging group-evaluations. Turner et al. – describing this relation of the self and the collective – assert that "there is a collective self, which emerges as part of the normal variation in self-definition" (1994, 462). Since group-members' self is defined based on their group and evaluated through its perceived merits, they will "strive for evaluatively positive intergroup distinctiveness" (Hogg 2016, 9) because their self-concept is tied to their group identification (Tajfel et al. 1979). Hence, group members "attempt to maximize differences between the ingroup (the group to which one psychologically belongs) and the out-group (psychologically relevant opposition group)" (Greene 2004, 137) to preserve the prestige and status of their in-group (Hogg 2016), which may also be the source of negative perception and of animus competition with out-groups. This effect is amplified by the development of social-identity and other social-psychological factors; as Smith, Mackie, and Claypool (2015) argue, the tendency to compete is greater for groups than for individuals. Therefore, in intergroup-conflict groups fight for a positive social identity and demand loyalty from their members, where out-group compassion is unacceptable.

In political terms, once identifying with a party, individuals are "motivated to protect and advance the party's status and electoral dominance as a way to maintain their party's positive

distinctiveness" (Huddy and Bankert 2017, 4). The struggle for distinctiveness leads to in-group favoritism, where individuals underestimate in-group differences, and out-group bias (or derogation), where individuals exaggerate inter-group differences. As a consequence, individuals have positive affect towards the in-group, and a negative affect towards the out-group, which is seen as inferior.

This collective dimension of political identity as well as cultural group membership have positive and negative implications on inter-group behavior. An often emphasized positive societal effect is that social group identification "enable[s] a population of heterogeneous individuals to solve important coordination problems" (Efferson, Lalive, and Fehr 2008, 1844) by creating heuristic-like markers. Furthermore, it can reduce uncertainty related to the self via social categorization and increase self-esteem when derived from group-identity (Hogg 2016).

Yet, affective polarization can have – to a certain extent – inevitable adverse consequences; the maintenance of group-distinctiveness creates inter-group barriers and social distance amongst groups, leading to an affectively polarized climate. A tradeoff which highlights this issue's importance was pointed out by Lipset, who concisely writes that "inherent in all democratic systems is the constant threat that the group conflicts which are democracy's life-blood may solidify to the point where they threaten to disintegrate the society" (1981, 83). Therefore, as explained by SIT, polarization leads to the phenomenon that is familiar to political scientists: the existence of a Manichean antagonism of a virtuous in-group to a homogeneous, morally corrupt, deceived, and evil out-group. In sum, a high degree of polarization can be highly destructive from a democratic perspective and has unfavorable consequences on domains beyond politics (Iyengar and Westwood 2015).[1]

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[1] Also known as social distance theory, which was famously created by Bogardus (1933), who developed a scale to measure social distance of groups, which was applied to political settings by Almond and Verba's (1960) Civic Culture. The same social-distance approach was the basis of Iyengar et al.'s (2012) conceptualization for affective polarization.

1.2.3. Partisanship as a Source of Social-Identity

To demonstrate SIT's applicability, this chapter argues that partisanship does function as a basis for social identity, and thus political competition between political groups can be interpreted in the context of inter-group conflict, as outlined by SIT.

As pointed out by Tajfel et al. (1979, 41), there are three conditions which must hold for intergroup differentiation responsible for the bimodal distribution of evaluations, namely "internalized (…) group membership as an aspect of self-concept", "social situation must be such as to allow intergroup comparisons", and that "the out-group must be perceived as a relevant comparison group" (1979, 41). These conditions correspond to self-categorization theory (Turner et al. 1987), which claims that group-identification and cohesion depend on group salience, which can be intensified by "any factor that increases the 'separateness' and 'clarity' of a category" (Huddy 2013, 24).

Adopting these for the analysis of the US elections, it is clear that the last two conditions are satisfied: the two-party system and the political context allow Republicans and Democrats to be flawlessly compared. However, to persuasively demonstrate that SIT applies to the domain of politics, one should show that – as outlined by the first condition – identification to political parties, thus, partisanship, can be understood as a form of social identity. This point has been extensively demonstrated by scholarly literature (see Greene 2004; Huddy 2001; Huddy and Bankert 2017; Lelkes 2016; Tajfel and Turner 2004). Weisberg and Greene succinctly claimed that "simply categorizing oneself politically as sympathetic to either party is likely enough to begin psychological group processes" (2003, 90). Confirming these claims, Westwood et al. showed convincing evidence from the United States, Great Britain, Spain and Belgium that "citizens are more strongly attached to political parties than to the social groups that the parties represent" (2018, 1). Focusing on the US, Lelkes argued that firstly, identification to political parties has increased through time, and secondly,

that party identification became an "increasingly strong correlate of political attitudes and behaviour" (2016, 11). Generally, this evidence affirms that partisanship is a social identity.

Painting a bit more nuanced picture, West and Iyengar (2020) present recent empirical evidence from a panel survey which shows that the salience of partisan-identity-internalization is fluctuating, but it is significantly more intense during political campaigns when there is greater identity-threat. Their findings show that partisanship significantly contributes to the self-conception of individuals, even more than other social identities such as race, gender, religion, and social-economic status (see also Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012). These findings follow the theoretical expectation of self-categorization theory and social identity theory.

The application of SIT to the political context implies that since in politics it is parties which serve as the object of group-affiliation, parties will serve as in-groups and as out-groups for citizens' social identity. The view that parties serve as a form of identity to which affiliation is primarily affective (Norris 2004) has been demonstrated before: partisan affiliation – despite being initially defined as an "affective orientation to an important group-object in [an] environment" (Campbell et al. 1960, 121) – is frequently treated as a unidirectionally positive concept which follows an instrumental logic. Yet, the instrumental nature of partisanship is contested in recent publications (see Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). Huddy and Bankert (2017) argue that two connected but qualitatively different notions of partisanship exist. While the instrumental definition focuses on beliefs, ideological self-placement, party proximity and policy positions, the expressive definition is affective in nature, which understands partisanship as a form of social identity (Greene 2004; Huddy 2001).

Recent literature confirms that a qualitative shift has taken place, due to which "partisanship no longer simply indicates political preferences, but (…) has become an important social identity" (West and Iyengar 2020), as a result of which "party identification (…) is more of an affective than instrumental or ideological bond" (Iyengar and Westwood 2015, 704). While a link between

partisanship and affect is theoretically expected, partisanship should not be equated with affect, as it has much deeper roots in identity; as Converse and Pierce remark, "partisanship is multifaceted and (...) diverse measures of partisanship should not be treated as functional equivalents" (1985, 142).

This section argued that – since partisan identification serves as an important social identity – the electoral competition of political groups can be interpreted as an inter-group conflict, and thus partisans' interactions can be interpreted along the lines of SIT. Although the nature of dimension's affiliations has been established, what was hitherto not described is the respective relation of in-party affect to out-party affect. This question is explored in the next section.

1.2.4.   The Asymmetry of In-group and Out-group Affect

Criticism of SIT frequently converged upon the assumption that in-group identification breeds out-group animus. Empirical findings do not univocally support this theoretically sound assumption. According to Tajfel et al. (1979), an out-group is requisite for having a full-fledged social-identity considering that the favorable inter-group comparison is fundamental. In consonance with this claim, authors – who recognized the importance of resolving the endogeneity problem caused by the ambivalence of the causal chain – state that individuals first develop their positive identification, and only that leads to negative out-group evaluation (Huddy and Bankert 2017; Wagner 2021). These claims generated the expectation that if in-group favoritism is getting stronger, out-group animosity should synchronously grow as well.

Contrary to these expectations, authors have also repeatedly claimed that "outgroup derogation is not an essential counterpart to in-group favoritism" (Wagner 2021, 5), and that they are not reciprocally related (Greene 2004). According to this critical view, although these dimensions are linked, change in one does not have elicit a corresponding change in the other to the opposite direction. Therefore, an asymmetry in in-group favoritism and out-group animosity can occur.

Pointing at the lack of multicollinearity of these dimensions, Maggiotto and Piereson (1977) claim that independents (who have lower degree of identification) and strong partisans alike have high variance in their affective relation to the out-group. Yet, seemingly contradicting evidence was presented by Iyengar and Krupenkin (2018), who show that the connection of in-group favoritism to out-group animosity in increasingly more consistent, and voters "seek to maintain psychological balance in their evaluations of in-group and out-group targets" (2018, 202) as a consequence of recently observable higher polarization and partisan sorting. The conclusion that "to dislike your opponent implies liking for your fellow partisans" (2018, 202) is in alignment with SIT, but does not repudiate the claims that the relation of negative out-group affect and positive in-group affect is not necessarily symmetrical.[2]

This asymmetry's importance is two-fold: firstly, by not looking at these concepts as exact opposites, this asymmetry causes a greater degree of variation in affective identification, and, therefore, in polarization. Furthermore, recognizing that parallel changes are possible also raises the question that it is not a zero-sum game: some citizens may identify with multiple groups while some may have negative affect towards more of them. Secondly, it underlines the necessity to examine not only affective polarization per se, but also its two dimensions – namely in-party and out-party affect – which may be unevenly responsible for effects we attribute to polarization. To explore the merits of the latter point, the next section explicates the theoretical framework on in-group and out-group identity vis-á-vis to negative and positive party identification.

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[2] Furthermore, Iyengar and Krupenkin (2018) argue that this difference is due to disparate measurements: while Feeling Thermometers show a largely asymmetrical relationship, this is less pronounced when looking at 'trait and affect' measures. This difference is also true for temporal change, where Feeling Thermometers show larger variation.

1.2.5. The Two Dimensions: Negative and Positive Partisanship

As established, political parties are objects of identification and can be understood as in-groups and out-groups of intergroup conflicts, towards which individuals can have positive and negative affective identifications. Although at first it may seem like a conceptual stretching to associate in-group favoritism to the identification-based expressive view of partisanship, this equation of terms is warranted. As it was previously argued, partisanship is conceptualized in such a way that it adheres to SIT and shares its foundations. In this sense, affective polarization is an "outgrowth of partisan social identity" (West and Iyengar 2020, 130) and is indeed "intrinsically linked (…) to partisanship" (Harteveld and Wagner forthcoming).

Identification to parties is best described through the well-established notion of partisanship, which – primarily and almost exclusively – was understood as support for parties, and negative affective affiliations towards out-parties were neglected (Boonen 2019). The positive component may capture and describe the fundamental idea behind partisanship exactly because if one is closer to party A (the in-party), it means they are further from party B (the out-party). In other words, as Boonen (2019) rightfully points out, in a "one-dimensional two-party-system (…) supporting party A goes hand in hand with not-supporting party B" (2019, 110). Nevertheless, partisanship's unidimensional view oversimplifies complex mechanisms and postulates implications that may not be derivable only from in-party identification, because both negative and positive dimensions have "distinct antecedents and consequences" (Medeiros and Noël 2014, 2023). For this reason, literature – which also refers to SIT and regards partisanship as an identity – makes a distinction between positive and negative partisanship.

The negative partisanship view is crucially different from its counterpart in a sense that "voters are not buying into a system via this party; this party alienates them" (Ridge 2020). Thus, it leads to participation and voting based on "hostility toward the opposing party and its leaders" (Abramowitz

and McCoy 2019, 137) and breeds negative affect. Yet, the definition of negative partisanship is aligned with the claim that asymmetry can exist in in-party and out-party affect, since "negative partisanship captures the notion that disdain for the opposing party is not necessarily accompanied by strong in-party attachments" (Bankert 2020, 1).

Seemingly, conceptualization of negative partisanship seems straightforward. Nevertheless, researchers face many intricacies which resemble the debate on the relationship of in-group and out-group affect. While perceiving negative component of partisanship as a distinct dimension vis-á-vis to positive partisanship, Richardson (1991), similarly to the suggestion of Campbell et al. (1960), treated it as a complementary dimension – so to say a negative continuum – of positive party identification.

Although there are reasons to think that negative and positive identification – or affect – are not only different in their direction but also in their quality, the second conceptual view is appealing for one main reason: treating them on the same scale allows clean comparison. Similarly, treating these concepts separately would be theoretically problematic, because it would allow contradicting values for one party which should not be accommodated in the same model; it is absurd to assume that one can simultaneously have both positive and negative orientation towards a political entity. Arguably, it is for this reason that extant literature of affective polarization adopts the latter view.

Therefore, I use the term negative partisanship as antithetical to positive partisanship, forming an identification scale not from attachment to detachment, but to active refusal. This scale of identification corresponds to the one underlying SIT which has been elaborated upon extensively in the previous section, pointing out that while correspondingly valenced values are attributable to the in-party and out-party, their connection is asymmetrical and not always antagonistic.

1.2.6. Affective Polarization: The State of Literature

After situating affective polarization in the polarization literature, presenting relevant conceptual debates, theorizing its motivational importance and presenting its dimension's asymmetric relationship, this section focuses on affective polarization and presents the state of the evidence.

Succinctly expressing the essence of affective polarization, Wagner (2021) writes that "to capture the extent to which citizens hold both positive in-group affect, and negative outgroup affect towards parties, researchers have coined the term affective polarization" (2021, 2). As follows from this definition, the systematized level the concept of affective polarization can be broken down to two dimensions of affective evaluation – defined as "a valence conception of liking-disliking" (Marcus 2000, 227) – of in-party and out-party. Therefore, this thesis adopts the standard view that the degree of affective polarization is characterized by the absolute difference of in-group and out-group affect.

Correspondingly to polarization's conceptual view of Fiorina and Abrams (2008), which looks at bimodality as a necessary but insufficient condition which – to be jointly sufficient – needs to cooccur with the condition that the two modes are converging towards the extremes, this definition and theoretical view of affective polarization satisfies both criteria. As a direct implication of the SIT's claim of in-group and out-group sorting the condition of bimodality is satisfied, while – to assess the degree of polarization – the condition of converging towards the extremes is measured. As Fiorina and Abrams (2008) rightfully remark, whether a distribution is polarized ultimately depends on one's judgement, but whether one distribution is more polarized than other distributions is graspable based on this presented criteria. Therefore, since the American electorate's bimodality is derivable from social identity theory and the two-party system exists, the degree and direction of affective polarization can be reduced to one factor, namely the distance between affect towards in-group minus out-group. Along these lines, the greater the distance between the modes, the more they converge towards the poles, hence, the more polarized the distribution.

Before proceeding to the review of the existing literature on affective polarization, an important theoretical element must be defined. When looking at polarization, literature – mostly implicitly – distinguishes three levels of granularity, namely the level of individuals, parties, and country. This distinction was explicitly remarked by Wagner (2021), who argues that while in multiparty systems there is a meaningful difference between the latter two levels, in two-party systems these are indistinguishable. However, it is important to point out that the distinction of individuals and country does not only mark differences in aggregation of data but are also conceptually different. Whether a society is polarized ought to be analyzed on the country-level, but when polarization is used as an explanatory variable of behavior the individual level analysis is more appropriate. Accordingly, this thesis concentrates on the individual-level phenomenon. As established in the previous chapter, individual's self-concept is connected to their social identity, which is tied to group-level behavior. Although it is the individual which is of interest here, to sufficiently understand affective polarization, I also demonstrate studies dealing with more aggregated concepts and measurements.

A major segment of literature concerning the public's affective polarization has dealt with establishing its conceptual difference to other forms of – mostly ideological – polarization or partisan sorting. The aforementioned debate regarding the polarization of the American society argued that affective polarization is not an artefact or a mere spillover of ideological polarization, since data shows that while ideological positions remained largely constant (Hetherington 2008), the difference of affective evaluations of parties changed significantly (Lelkes 2016).

The same tendency is apparent when ratings of ideological identifiers are examined between 1970 and 2010, measured on a Feeling Thermometer 0-100 scale:[3] while conservatives' mean in-group

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[3] Where 0 is 'cold feeling' towards an entity and 100 is a warm feeling, 50 being neutral. This scale will be examined later in the second Chapter (in 2.4.2.)

evaluation remains in the 68-73 range and out-group evaluation in the 41- 44 range, the same values for liberals are 66-69 and 50-46, respectively (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012, 414). However, if we look at in-party and out-party evaluations, there is an observable tendency of growing affective polarization since 1978 (22.64) until 2016 (40.87) – as shown by Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes (2012) on ANES Time Series Data. Furthermore, this tendency of polarization is consistent across alternative indicators of partisan affect, since affective polarization is also observable if we look at Feeling Thermometer evaluations of presidential candidates (Iyengar and Krupenkin 2018).

Although this tendency is clear, many pointed out (Abramowitz 2013; Iyengar et al. 2019; Lelkes 2016) that "these changes have been driven almost entirely by feelings toward the out-party" (Lelkes 2016, 10). Out-party evaluations have decreased dramatically between 1978 (49) and 2016 (25), while in-party evaluations – although fluctuated and deteriorated slightly in the past years – remained largely constant between 1978 (71) and 2016 (68). As follows, implications pointing at the asymmetry of polarization should be more pragmatically examined, because dimensions of polarization are not responsible for its variation to the same extent.

A major stream of literature examined affective polarization as an outcome, focusing on its antecedents and conditioning factors, mentioning incivility of media coverage and social media (Tucker et al. 2018) and echo-chambers which may "insulate people from opposing views about current events" (Bail et al. 2018, 9216). Increased negative political advertisements are also vindicated for rising levels of affective polarization (Hetherington 2008), but a variation of effect on independents and strong partisans is shown (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012). A related phenomenon was shown by Fiorina and Abrams who observed the "deemphasis of traditional electoral strategies aimed at persuading swing voters in favor of an emphasis on maximizing turnout of the base" (2008, 565), which may also contribute to the division between partisans.

Correspondingly to the theoretical expectation that polarization depends on the level of partisan-identification's internalization, scholars showed that levels of affective polarization correlate with the salience of electoral campaigns, and that "as elections lose salience affective polarization declines" (Hernández, Anduiza, and Rico in press, 1). However, affective polarization – out-party animosity in particular – is not showing great volatility, and is "unrelated to particular electoral outcomes" (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012, 415).

Although authors have addressed some of the consequences of affective polarization, often pointing at apolitical ramifications, several questions remain unanswered. Despite having momentous implications and significance, little work has investigated the topic this thesis explores, namely affective polarization's effect on political participation. Before reviewing these publications, the next section discusses the concept of political participation.

1.3.   *Participation: Propensity to Vote and Non-Voting Participation*

After conceptualizing and presenting literature and recent findings on affective polarization, this section defines and conceptualizes political participation, which is subsequently linked to affective polarization.

As noted by Mark Franklin, participation is "the lifeblood of democracy" (1996, 2), which can take many shapes and forms. Definitions point out that "political participation refers to voluntary activities undertaken by the mass public to influence public policy, either directly or by affecting the selection of persons who make policies" (Uhlaner 2015, 504). Since "the concept of political participation is nothing more than an umbrella concept which accommodates very different forms of action constituting differentiated phenomena" (Huntington and Nelson 2013, 14), the notion of political participation does not only constitute showing up at the booths, but also participating in campaigns, donating money to candidates and parties, signing a petition or protesting. While some

definitional disagreements exist on whether it is necessary condition to have an effect on others[4] and policy outcomes or whether it is necessary that the effect is intentional, these examples of participation are widely used by scholars.

Yet, literature on political behavior often delineates voting – the most basic form of participation – from other forms of activities (Milbrath 1981). Following the scholarly tradition, this thesis treats political participation as a concept which is comprised of two dimensions, namely propensity to vote and non-voting participation. Since the former dimension lends itself more easily for analysis, the latter dimension is often overlooked, despite its importance to electoral behavior. Including non-voting participation in the analysis adds further validity to the study as multiple forms of participation are addressed.

Early studies of electoral behavior explained voting on the individual level via socio-demographic factors (Rokkan 2009). Assessing their effects, Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) showed that the two most influential ones are age and education, which was also confirmed by the comparative analysis of Blais (2000). Furthermore, it was argued that participation is determined by factors such as socialization, long-term party identification (Campbell et al. 1960), short-term effects like recurring issues, or availability of resources (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995), while recent theories highlight the importance of psychological engagement and interest (Blais 2007) or expressive motivations (Brennan and Hamlin 1998), where the benefit of voting is intrinsic to the act of voting.

The findings of participation literature is aligned with SIT on many grounds: it was shown that partisans vote at a higher rate than independents (Huddy, Mason, and Aarøe 2015), highlighting the importance of group-identification. As Geys puts it, voting "expresses and re-affirms who one is and

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[4] Some would consider reading an article on politics, buying fair-trade coffee or boycotting certain products as political participation, where its expressive feature is more pronounced than its actual effect on politics (see Van Deth 2015).

who one is not" (2006, 19). Similarly, it is theoretically sound to assume that putting on a bumper-sticker or showing up at a march or rally also have an expressive feature where citizens can express their political identity. Furthermore, evidence also points to the importance of psychological engagement – be it interest, emotional investment, or entertainment.

After the conceptualization of political participation, the consequent chapter links the concepts of affective polarization and participation.

1.4. *Expectations on the Effect of Affective Polarization on Participation*

Literature on polarization has discussed its implications on turnout, offering two mechanisms connecting the two concepts. What is somewhat puzzling about these mechanisms is that their expectations of the effect are contradictory. The first mechanism – also referred to as the 'demobilization hypothesis' – holds that high polarization leads to incivility, alienation, and distrust in democracy, which turns citizens off and demotivates voting (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995; Hetherington 2008). This hypothesis was built on the work of Fiorina et al. (2006) who had a similar observation regarding ideological polarization, where – showing that there are plenty of independent voters – they claimed that elite polarization may leave independents without compelling options, thus they will not show up at the booths. Contributing to the debate on the effect of negative media on politics and attitudes, Mutz and Reeves (2005) show that political conflict is more and more visible in television programs. Consequently, uncivil manner of discourse leads to distrust and discourages positive political attitudes. Thus, this mechanism suggests that the higher affective polarization is, the lower political participation will be.

Conversely, the second mechanism – which relies on SIT and is widely used (Harteveld and Wagner forthcoming; Maggiotto and Piereson 1977) – argues that polarization leads to (the perception of) higher group-competition, which "raises the (…) stakes of electoral competition" (Ward and Tavits

2019, 2) and motivates for group members to protect their self-esteem, identity and group distinctiveness. This hypothesis was also initially conceived for ideological polarization, but is also applied on affective polarization (Wagner 2021). Thus, the more individuals are affectively polarized, the more likely they are to participate.

Empirical difficulties to provide evidence for such mechanisms abound. Yet, some evidence was shown in support of the former hypothesis, although most convincing evidence points in the direction of the mobilization hypothesis. Looking at ideological polarization, Abramowitz and Stone observed a positive relationship at the 2004 US Elections, concluding that "the greater [voters] extremism on the issues, the more likely they were to participate" (2006, 153) opposing the claim of Fiorina et al. (2006) that ideological polarization has a negative effect on turnout because it turns off voters. Contributing to this debate, Kleiner (2020) shows that while those on the right are mobilized, this effect does not hold for those on the left, suggesting a differential effect across the spectrum.

Despite its importance, the effect of affective polarization on turnout has been principally ignored by scholars until recently – except a handful of pioneers, who did the groundwork for more extensive research. A systematic cross-national analysis was conducted by Ward and Tavits (2019), who – by including 43 elections of 34 countries from Comparative Study of Electoral Systems data in their analysis – demonstrate that "affectively polarized individuals (...) view democratic competition as intense and high-stakes and that they turn out at higher rates" (2019, 1). Their analysis shows that "respondents with higher levels of Affective Polarization are expected to turnout at a rate of 92%, a full six percentage points higher than respondents with lower levels of affective polarization." (2019, 7). Therefore, this study gives credence to the mobilization hypothesis, namely that affective polarization leads to the perception of higher political competition, which has a motivational force for participation.

Further research was conducted by Harteveld and Wagner (forthcoming) who examined the same relationship in the Netherlands, Germany and Spain with an expanded theoretical scope. Besides the inclusion of political sophistication in their model, Harteveld and Wagner also pointed out the possibility that the relationship of affective polarization is reciprocal. Their analysis shows strong support for the mobilization hypothesis and claims that the effect of affective polarization on turnout "dwarfs that of ideological polarization and also appears both stronger and more robust than the reverse effect of turnout on affective polarization" (forthcoming). Furthermore, these effects are not true for only the politically sophisticated. On the contrary, findings show that marginal effects are the strongest for those with lower sophistication.

The most extensive study was done by Iyengar and Krupenkin (2018), who analyzed the trends of participation and the effect-differential of partisan affect. Their analysis demonstrates that the effect of in-party and out-party thermometer on voting as well as non-voting participation are significant, suggesting that negative out-party affect and positive in-party affect both have a positive relationship to participation. These results correspond to earlier findings of Abramowitz and Stone (2006) who, when examining the 2004 Presidential Elections, concluded that "Americans either loved or hated [Bush] and they went to the polls in record numbers to express those feelings" (2006, 141).

All in all, these studies suggest that affective polarization has a positive effect on voter turnout. However, whether this effect is attributable to the positive or negative dimension of affective polarization has not yet been adequately addressed. In other words, do the underlying variables lead to higher participation on their own, or is it their difference – in other words affective polarization – which is responsible for this effect?

This question has significant implications: we can explore the implications of affective polarization by showing how the two dimensions are situated, whether they show an uneven strength of effect and power. Providing answers addressing this indeterminacy issue is of utmost importance.

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Firstly, it furthers the scientific understanding of the phenomena of affective polarization including its implications and internal structure. Secondly, imbalanced effects would carry great relevance to other fields of political science such as literature of negative campaigning, participation and voting, and would have practical implications on political campaigns, elections, and overall, democracy.

1.5. Loyalty or Loathing? The Differential Effect of Negative Out-party and Positive In-party Affect on Political Participation

Literature presented in the previous section shows that affective polarization positively correlates with turnout. However, it remains unanswered whether it is a conjoint phenomenon, or the effect is mainly attributable to one of the dimensions.

Recently, following a discussion on this relationship, Iyengar et al. (2019) pointed to this as a direction which merits further research. Following their directives, this thesis takes the next step to address the indeterminacy problem within the concept of affective polarization, while expanding the theoretical scope to non-voting participation. Therefore, this section focuses on the theoretical relation of affective polarization's dimensions – namely in-party and out-party affect – to political participation and outlines two possible explanations. If we take these dimensions separately, psychology and political science offer explanations for both, leading to the puzzle this thesis addresses. Before reviewing these streams of literature, the theoretical aspects of SIT on motivation and its applicability are discussed.

According to SIT group-identification leads to the creation of in-group and out-group, where in-group distinctiveness is emphasized. It is theoretically sound to claim that the more one identifies with a group, the more engaged she will be to fight for her identity. However, since conflict is understood in relation to the out-group, it is also equally sensible to theorize that the more one is set against an out-group, the more threatened she will feel, and since the stakes are high, she will be

motivated to participate in the conflict. This would imply that the greater the distance of the two evaluations, the higher the perceived intergroup competition, thus, the higher the motivation to participate. This view is in accordance with the affective polarization literature that does not differentiate between the conceptual dimensions, only looks at evaluations' difference.

However, it would not be a stretch of the SIT framework if one would argue these effects are not equivalent and not all competitions were born equal. The two possibilities can be explained by the dominance of in-group favoritism and of out-group derogation in intergroup conflict. To take an intuitive example, a football match where spectators cheer and support their teams and are driven by in-group favoritism is incomparable to the one where spectators are showing derogatory attitude and are driven by out-group animosity. These ideal-typical extremes are not realistic, and it is reasonable to expect that a football match contains both elements to an extent. Yet, to understand the inter-group dynamics, it is essential to disentangle their effects and show their respective strength in driving behavior.

1.5.1. The Positivity Hypothesis: *I'm with Her* [5]

Probably the more straightforward explanation of the phenomenon that higher affective polarization leads to higher levels of turnout relates to the dimension of positive party identification and in-group affect. The *positivity hypothesis* holds that it is chiefly the positive in-group identification that motivates voters to participate in elections, as they identify with a party and would like to contribute to the realization of its goals.

This hypothesis is well-founded in the scholarly literature: as argued before, the SIT postulates that intergroup behavior is driven by the need to protect one's in-group status, group prestige and

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[5] Hillary Clinton's campaign slogan of her 2016 Presidential Campaign

positive group distinctiveness (Hogg 2016) so that one's identity is protected. Therefore, party-identification and in-party affect motivate citizens to contribute to the electoral success of their party. Correspondingly, a great wealth of literature has established the relationship of party identification to voting behavior (Bartels 2000; Bartolini and Mair 2007; Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1969; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), claiming that it is not only one of the most stable indicators of voting behavior and participation (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Niemi and Jennings 1991), but also is one of the strongest predictors. Party identification can also increase the sense of political efficacy and reduce the cost of participation by functioning as a heuristic (Norris 2004), which also supports the positivity hypothesis.

The motivational importance of party identification was also echoed by Huddy, Mason, and Aarøe (2015), who show that expressive partisan identity drives campaign involvement. They conclude that the relationship of partisan identity to campaign activity is "substantial and positive" (2015, 10), and that "strongly identified partisans feel angrier than weaker partisans when threatened with electoral loss and more positive when reassured of victory" (2015, 1), leading to higher involvement. Likewise, via their extensive field experiment in the United States Gerber, Huber, and Washington (2010) convincingly demonstrated that their treatment has strengthened partisan identity, which had a significant effect on participant's political attitudes such as turnout to vote.

Therefore, this thesis examines the *positivity hypothesis* which holds that it is positive in-party affect which is the dominant force in driving political participation. The theoretical expectations are that since in-party identifiers are invested in the competition, are motivated to further their party's goals, and are participating in electoral processes to express their identity.

1.5.2. The Negativity Hypothesis: *I'd Rather Be a Russian Than a Democrat* [6]

Since SIT is not sufficient to explain the relative relationship of the two underlying dimensions concerning their effect on voting behavior, this section draws on alternative literature to illuminate these and to construct sound theoretical explanations. Although convincing findings regarding the importance of in-group affect are abound, literature also argues that the primary driving force of behavior is out-group bias.

When describing human behavior, the asymmetrical effect of positive and negative information in general, and the relative strength of negative information and evaluations in particular, have been repeatedly demonstrated by the discipline of psychology. The relative strength of negativity is often referred to as negativity bias, which "manifests itself in the fact that negative stimuli are generally construed as more elaborate and differentiated than the corresponding positive stimuli" (Rozin and Royzman 2001, 299). Negativity bias – which is generally explained by anchoring effects, overly optimistic expectations, asymmetrical cognitive weighting or evolutionary factors (Soroka 2014) – is observable in learning, decision-making, empathy, attention and moral judgements, and in as fundamental aspects as arousal or taste aversion (Rozin and Royzman 2001). As a conclusion of their review of psychology literature on the topic, Baumeister et al. emphasize the pervasiveness of negativity, and claim that it is apprent in "both cognition and motivation; (…) complex human information processing, and emotional responses" (2001, 355).

Additionally, the motivational asymmetry is also present in many aspects of human behavior. It is implicitly postulated in Maslow's motivational hierarchy, where "the most basic and primary motivations involve escaping from aversive states, such as hunger, deprivation, cold, and danger [while] the more positive motivations of seeking esteem, love, belongingness, and self-

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[6] Slogan written on the T-shirts of two Republicans attending a Trump rally in Ohio, 2018.

actualization only begin to direct behavior when the negative or deficiency (…) motives have been satisfied" (Baumeister et al. 2001, 355), which is attributed to evolutionary factors, namely the primacy of survival over well-being.[7]

A similar claim was put forward by behavioral-economic prospect theory; Kahneman and Tversky's (1979) central claim was that loss-averse behavior is observable when negative and an equal positive outcome are available. In other words, "when people are making decisions about specific, impending events, they seem more motivated to avoid bad outcomes than to pursue good ones" (Baumeister et al. 2001, 356). This also holds in a riskless environment (Tversky and Kahneman 1991), which underlines its importance for political decision-making in general and voting in particular.

To what extent do these theories and findings apply to political behavior? Is loss-aversion and negativity bias apparent in politics? These questions are answered by Lau (1982), who – analyzing affective evaluation of presidents – have shown that negativity outweighs positivity when it comes to the consequences of evaluations. Further examples of loss-averse political behavior can be mentioned, such as the fact that consumption decreases more steeply during economic contraction than it increases for the same degree of economic expansion (Bowman, Minehart, and Rabin 1999), or that voters punish incumbents for economic downturns, but equal economic upturns are not rewarded uniformly (Bloom and Price 1975). This tendency in politics – or in some aspects of it – was also affirmed by Campbell et al., who claimed that "changes in the party balance are induced primarily by negative rather than positive attitudes toward the party controlling the executive branch of federal government" (1960, 554–55).

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[7] According to evolutionary accounts, "it is more difficult to reverse the consequences of an injurious or fatal assault than those of an opportunity unpursued, the process of natural selection may also have resulted in the propensity to react more strongly to negative than to positive stimuli" (Cacioppo and Gardner 1999 in Soroka 2014, 9). This is also affirmed by neurological studies (Tom et al. 2007), and by experiments showing loss-aversion for non-human primates. Although this thesis is not interested in extensively exploring loss-aversion's roots in evolutionary psychology, it fittingly demonstrates this feature's omnipresence.

The theoretical possibility of negativity's pervasiveness in politics has been also explored by literature of negative partisanship, which shows that out-party hostility and antipathy strongly predict electoral behavior in the United States (Abramowitz and McCoy 2019; Bankert 2020; Medeiros and Noël 2014). Similarly, other works of political science theorize that – since "there is ample evidence that political judgment is subject to a negativity bias, implying that party polarization is driven by outgroup hostility" (Iyengar et al. 2019, 142) – it may be the case that it is the "possibility of losing to disliked groups that pushes people to participate" (Harteveld and Wagner forthcoming).

Addressing the outlined puzzle regarding the effect of partisan affect on participation, some convincing, but non-extensive, evidence was shown by Iyengar and Krupenkin who – by analyzing ANES data between 1980 and 2016 – observe that "animosity toward the opposing party (...) has taken on a new role as the prime motivator in partisans' political lives" (2018, 211), which is a result of a recent changing trend. They conclude that while "initially [in the 1980s], positive feelings for the preferred party were the dominant motive for participation. (...) in the current era, it is negativity toward the opposition that is the stronger electoral motive" (2018, 2).

Conforming to this wide interdisciplinary tradition, this thesis explores the motivational importance and strength of negative out-party affect on political participation. I refer to this as *negativity hypothesis*, which claims that "decisions are based more on which party or candidate voters dislike than on which party or candidate they like" (Abramowitz and Webster 2017, 12). Thus, in the context of group-conflict and participation the theoretical expectation borrowed from Iyengar and Krupenkin is that "the impetus to participate (...) derive[s] from a desire to contribute to the defeat of a disliked candidate or party" (2018, 211).

1.6. *Summary of the Theoretical Chapter*

The scholarly debate on public polarization has been chiefly limited to ideological polarization, while affective polarization has gained scholarly attention only recently. Research shows that despite remaining largely constant ideologically, the American electorate is more and more affectively polarized – in other words, showing increasing affective distance between in-party and out-party evaluations – suggesting that affective polarization is a distinct phenomenon, not only an artifact or a spillover from ideological polarization (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012).

Following the scholarly tradition, this thesis relies on Social Identity Theory (SIT) to explain the theoretical foundations of affective polarization. According to SIT individuals' self-perceived group membership serves as a social identity, which – if internalized – has a great effect on attitudes towards the in-group and the out-group: belonging to a group will also in turn result in negatively identifying with the relevant out-group, which will lead to in-group favoritism and out-group animosity. Since self-identity is linked to in-group and out-group evaluation – and thus, group-distinctiveness (Hogg 2016) – group members are motivated to maximize the perceived differences and minimize the perceived similarities between the in-group and the out-group (Greene 2004), leading to polarized attitudes. Therefore, identification – and the maintenance of group status and prestige – holds great motivational importance.

As follows, since partisanship serves as a social identity – as theorized and empirically shown by many (see Greene 2004; Huddy and Bankert 2017; West and Iyengar 2020) – political competition can be understood as an intergroup conflict, where individuals – who are affectively related to political entities (Campbell et al. 1960) which serve as objects of identification – hold positive in-party affect and negative out-party affect. While some streams of literature assume that in-party and out-party affect go hand-in-hand, evidence shows that, although connected, negative and positive group-affect

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have an asymmetric relationship (Iyengar and Krupenkin 2018; Wagner 2021). In other words, greater in-party affect is not necessarily paired with corresponding negative out-party affect.

While previous work on affective polarization has focused on the concept's differentiation from other forms of polarization, on its antecedents and conditioning factors, literature exploring affective polarization's consequences remains limited and insufficient. Although some argue that excessive affective polarization leads to the disintegration of democracy, others point out that it may lead to increased levels of participation, which is a democratic necessity (Lipset 1981). Exploring the second possibility, one of the most intriguing puzzles hold that while, on the one hand, increasing affective polarization leads to greater group competition, which motivates group-members to participate, on the other hand, it may lead to an uncivil conflict and discourse, which may lower efficacy and would demobilize citizens. While some recent research univocally find that affective polarization leads to mobilization (Harteveld and Wagner forthcoming; Ward and Tavits 2019), several questions of crucial importance remain unanswered: is this effect truly the effect of affective polarization, or rather the underlying dimensions, namely in-party and out-party affect? This questions' importance is reinforced by findings on the asymmetric relation of affective polarization's dimensions.

Therefore, the puzzle this thesis explores is the following: is it in-party affect, or out-party affect which drives the effect of affective polarization on participation? The positivity hypothesis – in alignment with political science scholarly tradition – argues that it is in-party identification that drives voting behavior, because it is associated with a higher level of efficacy and lower costs. Supporting evidence shows that partisans are more likely to be involved in campaigns (Huddy, Mason, and Aarøe 2015), and partisanship is a consistent and strong predictor of participation (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Niemi and Jennings 1991).

Conversely, a long tradition of literature demonstrates negativity bias (the relative strength of effect of negative information over positive information) (Rozin and Royzman 2001) and loss-aversion (Kahneman and Tversky 1979) which affects information processing, decision-making, motivations and emotional responses, among many other aspects of behavior. As shown, this also affects the political domain. Therefore, the negativity hypothesis argues that it is negative out-group affect which has the stringer effect on participation. Some evidence suggest that it is out-group affect which is responsible for the growth of affective polarization (Abramowitz 2013), and that voting is more affected by out-party evaluations (Iyengar and Krupenkin 2018). Nonetheless, their analysis leaves further questions unanswered.

Existing literature has almost entirely failed to measure the effect and assign power to these dimensions. Though the greatest leap was taken by Iyengar and Krupenkin (2018), their primary focus was the changing landscape through time, and only touched upon the relationship of partisan affect and participation. Yet, they have not examined the relationship of affective polarization to participation, hence, they could not compare it to the effect of the dimensions effect alone. Furthermore, inquiries – such as of Ward and Tavits (2019) – only measured the effect on turnout, and excluded other forms of participation from their analysis, such as forms of non-voting participation. While Iyengar and Krupenkin (2018) measured the relationship of partisan affect to non-voting participation, they ignored the effect of affective polarization.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH DESIGN

The previous chapter reviewed literature of affective polarization and participation, defined and conceptualized these variables, established their theoretical background and presented these concepts' theoretical and empirical connection. To test these suggested relationships, this chapter outlines the testable hypotheses, research design, the operationalization of these concepts and the data.

2.1. Puzzle, Research Question and Hypotheses

The literature review pointed at two major puzzles: firstly, whether affective polarization leads to increased or decreased participation, and secondly, whether this effect is attributable equally to in-party affect and out-party affect. The previous chapter was concluded by pointing out gaps in the literature, such as the lack of analysis concerning the effect – and explanatory power – of in-party and out-party affect on participation compared to affective polarization, as well as the exclusion of non-voting participation from the analysis. Hence, to fill the aforementioned gaps, this thesis expands the analysis of Iyengar and Krupenkin (2018) by not only comparing the effects of the two dimensions to each other, but also measuring the effect of affective polarization. Furthermore, building on the findings of Iyengar and Krupenkin, the revised theoretical scope also examines non-voting participation.

However, it is not only these further contributions that justify this research, but also current empirical developments: aggregate results of the ANES data reveals that an unprecedented growth in affective polarization has led to a record-high level (52.1) of affective polarization (see exact measurement in section 2.4.2) in the United States (see Figure A1 in Appendix). In addition, mean out-party affect has also reached an all-time low (18.7). Considering these current trends, it seems

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worthy and timely to conduct further analysis on the newly available data. Therefore, in addition to the theoretical expansion, this thesis also broadens the hitherto explored temporal scope by including data from 2020.

Addressing the puzzle outlined above, this thesis examines the following research question: *What is the relationship between affective polarization and political participation*? In particular, the focus of this research is the potential differential strength of affective polarization's dimensions, namely in-party and out-party affect. To answer this research question, multiple sub-questions are to be addressed: (1) how does affective polarization influence political participation, both voting and non-voting participation, (2) to what extent can this effect be attributed to out-party affect or in-party affect, and (3) which of these dimensions has a more dominant effect? In addressing these questions, the following hypotheses are tested:

(H1) *Affective polarization is positively associated with political participation*

This directional hypothesis incorporates the general expectation of this thesis – based on the theoretical discussion on inter-group competition –that stronger affective polarization leads to higher political participation. Although supporting evidence has been shown in cross-national contexts as well as in the United States, the confirmation of this relationship on the new data would reinforce existing evidence.

(H2) *In-party affect is positively associated with political participation*

This thesis assumes that the in-party dimension of affective polarization is positively associated with political participation, because, according to the SIT, the stronger in-group affect the more pronounced group affiliations. Thus, the higher the in-group affect the more self-interested and engaged a person is in the conflict and more prone to participate.

(H3) *Out-party affect is negatively associated with political participation*

Consequently, and in alignment with the explanation of the former hypothesis, the higher the level of out-party affect is – in other words, the warmer one feels about the out-group – the less fierce the inter-group conflict is perceived, the less threatening the alternative, and the weaker the threat that the out-group poses to the status quo. Thus, this thesis hypothesizes a negative relationship of the variables: the more negative out-party effect is, the more the voter is engaged.

(H4) *Negative out-party affect has a stronger effect on participation than positive in-party affect*

This hypothesis resides on the negativity hypothesis or/and positivity hypothesis outlined in the theoretical chapter. After testing the effect for both dimensions separately, the comparison of the effect of in-group positivity and out-group negativity shows which dimension has greater relative strength.

2.2. Research Design and Methodology

This thesis conducts its analysis only on the case of the United States. Other researchers took a comparative perspective to affective polarization, which has its own merits; yet, disentangling the effect of the concept is sensitive to the changes which occur in cross-country comparison. Examining a two-party system is theoretically unambiguous in terms of inter-group conflict and group identification and simplifies the measurement and conceptualization of affective polarization. On the other hand, it avoids intricacies a multi-party system would hold: as Bankert argues, in multi-party systems "vote choice can be seen as a more affirmative act than in a two-party system where a vote for one party could feasibly be interpreted as a vote against the other" (2020, 4). While this may be only true in specific contexts, and in turn would be a challenge if vote choice should be explained, it is an advantage when in-party and out-party affect is compared. Thus, this design – and limited scope

to two-party systems – is the most appropriate to analyze individuals' attitudes at scale. Further research can use experimental designs, to – in unison with the present quantitative data analysis – strengthen the validity of this thesis' findings.

This thesis takes a correlational approach to hypothesis-testing without having claims of causality. The design of the analysis is as follows: firstly, after having presented the variables' descriptive dimensions, I analyze the main effect, namely of affective polarization on political participation, both in the past decades on aggregate data and in 2020. Secondly, affective polarization's dimensions' effects are tested, which is followed by their comparison so that their respective relationship is shown. Consequently, the marginal effects are shown to demonstrate the heterogeneity of effect.

To achieve this, the thesis methodologically resides on a quantitative secondary data analysis which allows for exploring associations of variables, for which generalized linear modelling is used. Although this methodology is limited to non-causal claims, its results are representative to the selected case. To assess temporal trends and explanatory variables' collinearity Spearson's correlations are used. For the analysis of the effect, two kinds of generalized linear modelling techniques are used. To predict voting (nominal binary) binomial logistic regression is used, while for the effect on non-voting participation (ordinal) ordered logit is employed.

Binomial Logistic Regression and Ordered Logit Regression – besides being a method which allows for analysis of the relationship of continuous independent and binary/ordinal dependent variables – do not have assumptions of linearity of relationships, of normality of distributions or of homoscedasticity, to which – as demonstrated before – the independent variables of interest would not conform to. While it assumes little of no multicollinearity among the independent variables, since the correlation of in-party and out-party affect is only weak, this does not pose threat to the validity of the results. Previous studies predicting voting (Iyengar and Krupenkin 2018; Matsusaka and Palda

1999) also relied on binomial logistic models. The overall effect of single variables in the model as well as the comparison of coefficients is shown by Wald's test.

To assess the overall fit of the models, this thesis relies on Nagelkerke's pseudo R^2 – a measure substituting R^2 which also applies to discrete general regression models (Nagelkerke 1991) – for the reason that its values are easy to compare and interpret as they fall within the range of 0 and 1. Additionally, Akaike's Information Criterion is used to compare the quality of models and to estimate prediction error.

2.3. Data

In terms of temporal dimensions, this thesis looks at the 2020 Presidential Election, which has not been included in any analysis to date due to the novelty of data. The primary data source for the present research is the American National Election Studies (ANES) data, which is "the longest-running representative sample survey of Americans' political attitudes with a vast battery of questions tapping party identification and partisan attitudes" (Iyengar and Krupenkin 2018, 202). ANES Time Series Cumulative Data (2019) is used to demonstrate historical trends of variables, which is augmented by additional data of voting-eligible population's (VEP) turnout rate from the United States Elections Project (McDonald 2021).

Hypothesis testing is carried out on the 2020 Time Series Study (2019), which is the most recent dataset available and not yet analyzed. It is composed of a pre-election and a post-election wave, with $N_{pre}=5441$ and $N_{post}=4783$ respondents, respectively. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this data collection exercise followed a mixed-method design where in-person interviews were replaced by self-administered online surveys, live video interviews and telephone interviews. The sample universe is comprised of U.S. eligible voters.

2.4. Variables, Operationalization and Measurement

Before proceeding to the analysis, these sections operationalize the concepts of political participation and its dimensions, affective polarization and its dimensions, and introduces the control variables used in the analysis. For a detailed description of variables and the respective survey questions, see Table A1 in Appendix.

2.4.1. Dependent Variables: Turnout and Non-Voting Participation

As outlined in the theoretical chapter, *political participation* is conceptually comprised of two dimensions, namely *voting turnout* and *non-voting participation*, which are used in the analysis as separate dependent variables. The operationalization of turnout is straightforward: did a person vote or did not, which is measured by a binary variable (voted). On the aggregate level, voting-eligible population's turnout-rate was used (VEP turnout-rate). The latter dimension – non-voting participation – can be operationalized by assigning multiple indicators to it, which comprise an index. Following the example of Greene (2004), who have developed an additive *partisan activity index*, an index is built from five binary variables, namely whether one (1) displayed campaign paraphernalia (2) signed a petition, (3) joined a march, protest or rally, (4) donated money to a candidate (5) or to a party in the past 12 months (see survey questions in Table A1 in Appendix). The last two dimensions are merged into one variable, measuring whether one donated to a candidate or to a party. These four variables are aggregated into an index variable of five categories, measuring how many of these activities were done by the respondent, which was recoded into a 3-level index, where those who did not do any of these were assigned to the lowest category, who did one were assigned to the second, while those who did two or more were assigned to the last.

These measurements are corresponding to the scholarly tradition. The gravest limitation of this data is the overreport of turnout, which is a widely observed phenomenon (Karp and Brockington

2005). While the VEP turnout in 2020 was 66.8% (McDonald 2021), 74.3% of the respondents claim they voted in the election. This difference between the census value and the survey value is clearly a limitation of the study and should be considered when interpreting the results. Those who refused to answer are treated as missing values for both variables. The description of these variables are shown in Table A1 in Appendix.

2.4.2. Independent Variables: Affective Polarization, In-Party and Out-Party Affect

Correspondingly to the conceptualization, affective polarization is understood as the absolute difference of its dimension's values (Mutz 2013). In alignment with the studies of Abramowitz (2013), Iyengar and Krupenkin (2018) and Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes (2012), *affective polarization* – and its conceptual dimensions, namely *in-party affect* and *out-party affect* – is measured by Feeling Thermometer (FT), which is a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means very cold feelings, 100 means very warm feelings. Furthermore, the neutral point of 50 is emphasized in the introductory text before the FT items are asked.[8] In other words, partisans' (including leaners) FT evaluations of their in-party and out-party form the two dimensions, and the distance of these evaluations stand for affective polarization variable. The scales of presidential candidate evaluations are formed the same way (see descriptions in Table A1 in Appendix), which are used as an alternative measurement of partisan affect.

While these measurement techniques are widely used, multiple features of FTs are contested. Most critique touch upon three main points: firstly, that the reason for this affect is not covered by

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[8] The wording of the intro is the following: "Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the person. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward the person and that you don't care too much for that person. You would rate the person at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the person" (American National Election Studies 2021, 381). Consequently, questions are worded as "On the feeling thermometer scale from 0 to 100, how would you rate [X]?"

these measurements, secondly, that FT scores "do not capture (…) affect towards fellow or opposing partisans rather than parties" (Wagner 2021, 10), and thirdly, that FT's 101-scale suffer from differential item functioning (Bankert 2020; Lelkes 2016), meaning that some negative and positive distances are not regarded as equal and variance across respondent exists. While the first point would not necessarily be eliminated by other measurements, the second point is a limitation from SIT's perspective, where it is not necessarily the case that intergroup competition – and the consequent social identity – results in tensions between the individual and the other group, but between group-members.

On the other hand, as was pointed out by Wagner, "these shortcomings should not prevent us from examining affective polarization using this existing measure, especially given recent evidence that different measures of affective polarization tend to correlate strongly" (2021, 10). Besides, FT has two main advantage over other propositions: FTs are widely available and easy to interpret, and – as argued by Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes (2012) – are less likely to be affected by social desirability bias.

2.4.3. Control Variables

Three sets of control variables are used in the models, which are entered stepwise to show the robustness of results (see description in Table A1 in Appendix). The basic socio-economic variables used are respondent's *sex (binary)*, *age (scale)*, and *education (1-5 scale)*, from which the latter two are named as good predictors of turnout by Blais (2000), thus, controlling for them makes results more robust. I refer to these in the model's formulas as 'demographics'. The second set of controls are included so that the change of effects' strength can be tracked based on the theoretical expectation of SIT. These variables are *interest in campaigns (1-3)* and *attention to elections (1-5)*, which stand for some form of cognitive involvement.

The third set of control variables are the two components of the standard seven-scale partisanship measurement, namely *partisan intensity (1-3)* and *direction* (0-1). The first item is computed from the 7-fold scale through emitting true independents, and coding together leaners, weak partisans and strong partisans regardless of their direction, forming a 3-fold scale. By the same logic, the directional component – excluding independents – accounts for only the direction (Democrat or Republican) of partisanship, disregarding its strength. These variables account for the differences in levels of group-identification (the variation of FT evaluations across different strengths of identities) and direction (group-membership).

CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS

To test the formulated hypotheses, the following chapter commences by showing the changing temporal trends of dependent and key independent variables and their dimensions. This is followed by a more in-depth description of the 2020 data, which highlights the features and contemporary affective polarization. Thirdly, after showing the empirical relationship of affective polarization and turnout on the temporal dimension, I present the evidence on their positive association, which is also substantiated by further binomial logistic modeling. To further explicate these findings and demonstrate the robustness of results, I show how the strength of partisanship conditions the relationship of predicted probability of voting and level of affective polarization. As a final step, I demonstrate the respective strength of in-party and out-party affect on voting.

3.1. Trends of Partisan Affect and Affective Polarization

Before turning to the data from 2020 to test the research hypotheses, it is essential to look at the temporal changes of key variables. Based on the combined dataset, Figure 1 depicts the change of mean in-party and out-party evaluations for both Democrats and Republicans, of the absolute difference of these means – affective polarization – as well as the turnout rate of voting-eligible population on presidential elections since 1980 until 2020. These variables' tendencies, distributions and relationships are examined in orderly fashion.

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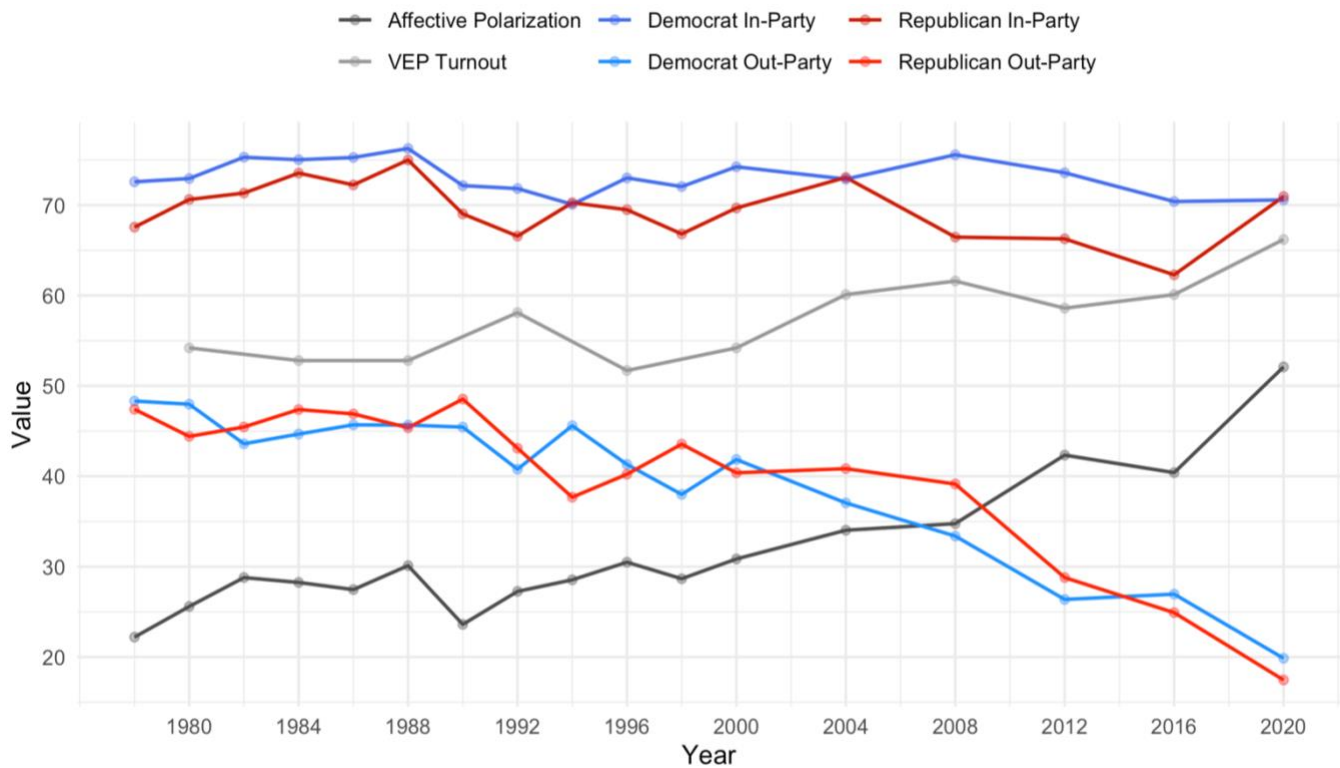
Figure 1: *Partisan Affect, Affective Polarization and Turnout in the United States*
Author's work based on data from ANES Time Series Cumulative Data (in election years), ANES 2020 Time
Series Study and US Elections Project

3.1.1. Distributions of Partisan Affect and Affective Polarization

Firstly, the trend that out-party evaluations are decreasing – which was already pointed out by

Lelkes (2016) and Iyengar et al. (2019) on earlier data – is even more pronounced by 2020. Both

Democrats' and Republicans' out-party affect is all-time low, 19.9 and 17.5, respectively. Similarly, the

overall trend that in-party evaluations remained largely constant also remains true. Republicans – after

the lowest level in 2016 (62.3) – showed a drastic increase in in-party evaluations by reaching 71.0,

while Democrats in-party evaluation only increased by 0.2, reaching 70.6 in 2020. These advancements

have put the trend of degrading in-party evaluations to a stop which was observable since 2004. All in

all, party evaluations have further polarized, which was mainly driven by the decrease in both out-

party affects, which suggest that it is rather out-group derogation which is responsible for the change

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of attitudes driving bipolarity. Thus, new data confirms that trends described by Abramowitz (2013) and Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes (2012) are still observable and getting more conspicuous.

Looking behind comparisons of aggregated means, Figure 2 breaks down in-party and out-party affect to partisanship's directional component. The distribution of partisan evaluations highlights the similarity of party thermometers as well as the strength of negativity which was observed in trends. In alignment with the predictions of SIT, these density graphs are not normally distributed but are skewed to the opposite directions. While in-party evaluations are predominantly positive, out-party evaluations are negative, indicating that partisans feel favoritism towards the in-party and animus towards the out-party. Furthermore, the comparison of the distributions of in-party and out-party affect also supports the theoretical assumption that their relationship is asymmetric: if in-party affect would have a correspondingly strong out-party value, these distributions would be each other's duplicate.

Although there is practically no deviation across parties in affect, Figure 2A and B clearly show that the distribution of Republicans' evaluations is converging to the endpoints to a greater extent than Democrats' evaluations. Yet, while the mode for in-party affect is 70 for Democrats and 85 for Republicans, for out-party affect it is 0 (the most extreme value) for both parties.

Additionally, besides showing a bimodal distribution, the comparison Figure 2A and B also contributes to existing evidence shown by Greene (2004) and confirms the theoretical expectation regarding the asymmetry of in-group favoritism and out-group animosity. Although this asymmetry exists for both parties, due to more diverging distributions, it is more pronounced for the Republicans for whom extreme evaluations are more frequent than for Democrats. The empirical relationship and multicollinearity of affective polarization's dimensions are assessed by analyzing datapoints jointly: a Spearman's bivariate correlation is run including both in-party and out-party affect, showing a statistically significant correlation at the 0.01 level with a -0.315 coefficient. This result confirms the

theoretical expectation that their relationship is negative, and that in-party favoritism is only weakly associated with out-group animosity.
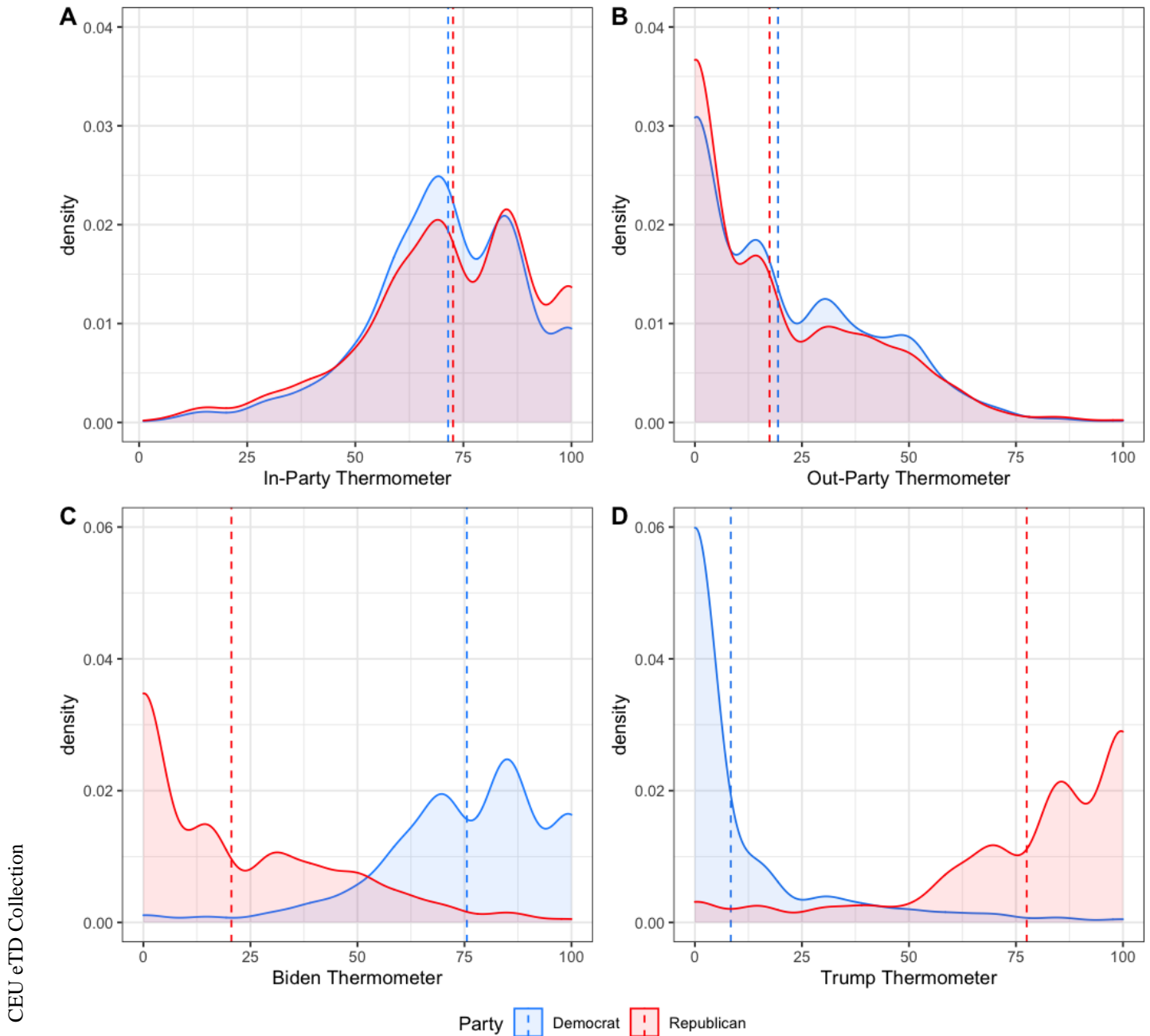
Figure 2 - *Distribution of In-Party, Out-Party, and Candidates' Feeling Thermometer Rating*
Author's work based on ANES 2020 Time Series Study data

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The tendency of drastic evaluations and the asymmetry of evaluations are also observable on another indicator of partisan affect, namely the FT evaluations of presidential candidates. While the mean evaluation of Joe Biden (plot C) is 74.1 for Democrats and 21.1 for Republicans, the same for Donald Trump (plot D) is 9.6 and 76.9, respectively, which paints a more polarized picture. Modes show a similar tendency as for party-affect: Republicans give most often 0 to Biden and 100 to Trump, while Democrats give 0 to Trump and 85 to Biden.

Affective polarization – as was pointed out earlier – has steeply increased and has never been higher: the average difference of evaluation of in-party and out-party has surpassed 50 thermometer points (see Figure 1). This increase is also more visible after the second Obama term where affective polarization showed a decreasing pattern, which broke its steady increase since 1990. Taking a closer look at affective polarization, Figure 3 presents its distribution broken down by parties.

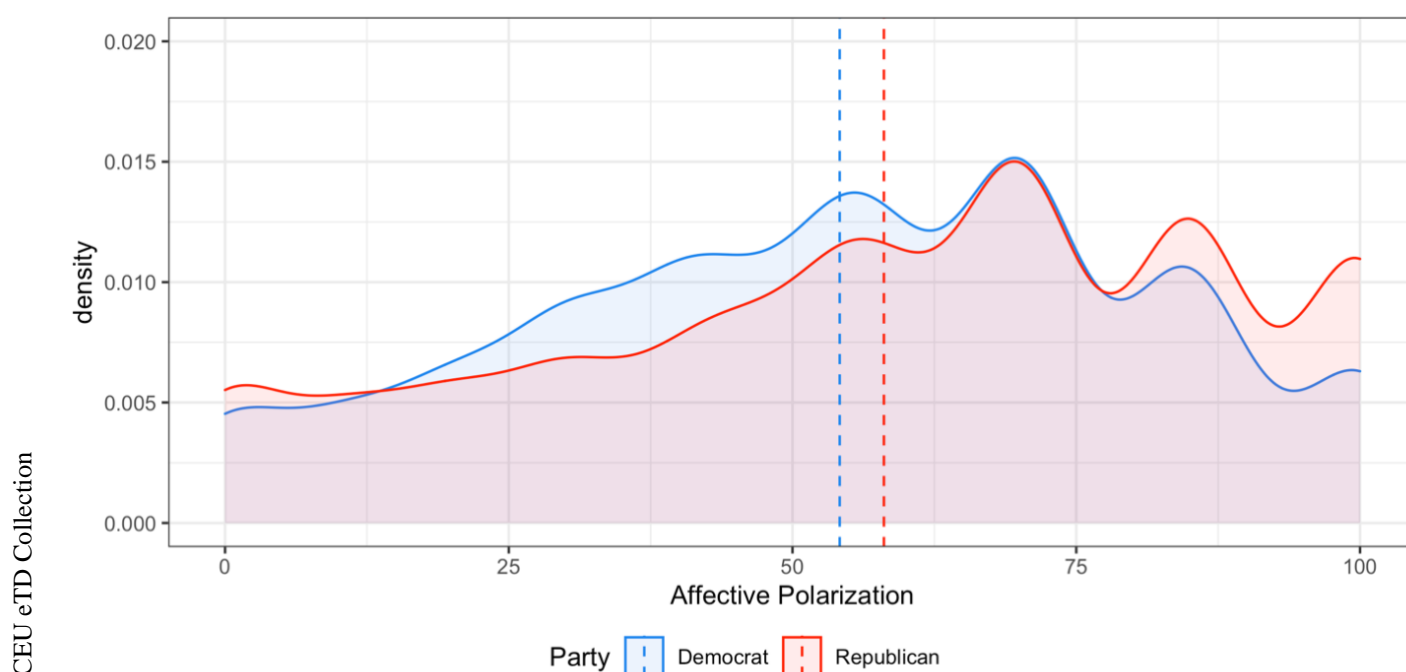**Figure 3:** *Distribution of Affective Polarization by Parties*
Author's work based on ANES 2020 Time Series Study data

As Figure 3 indicates, on average Republicans are 4.4 points more affectively polarized than Democrats. Moreover, while the density graph of Democrats is approximating a normal distribution, Republican's distribution is more skewed to the right, indicating a higher level of polarization. Despite the differences in means and distributions, their modes are identical.

3.1.2. Affective Polarization and Political Participation

The temporal relationship of affective polarization and VEP turnout-rate can be observed in Figure 1. To empirically substantiate their relationship, a two-tailed Pearson correlation of affective polarization and turnout shows a statistically significant relationship (on the 0.01 level) with the coefficient of 0.797, indicating a strong positive association. Although one should not attribute causality to this result, it allows us to reject the H_0 according to which these variables are independent.

While observing this relationship of aggregate measures is a promising sign, a relationship on the level of the population from aggregated data points does not allow us to interpret these results on the individual level. Examining the ANES 2020 data provides further credence for this claim. To show this association, affective polarization scale variable (0-100) is transformed[9] into an ordinal variable (0-10), which is put across the binary vote variable in a cross-table. As Table 1 displays, the higher the level of affective polarization, the higher the corresponding odds of voting (over not voting). One major outlier from this trend is the one corresponding to the highest possible polarization (value 10), which shows a 11.3% decrease (increase) in (not) voting. One possible explanation of this is the demobilization hypothesis, which claims that those who are so affectively polarized may find politics so uncivil and are so distrustful of politics that they are discouraged from participating. Although this

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[9] Recoding was done by deciles, but to preserve the neutral mid-point, it was carried out by shifting it by 5. As a result, the first bin contains values from 0-5, the second one from 6-15, the third one from 16-25, and so on. Hence, the 10th bin contains the values from 96-100.

hypothesis should be empirically tested, this outlier still does not diminish the existence of association, which is confirmed by Pearson Chi² test with a statistically significant value of 0.000***.

Table 1: *Cross-table of Affective Polarization and Voting*
Binomial Logistic Regression Model based on ANES 2020 Time Series Study

Affective Polarization (0-10)	Voter turnout in 2020		Total
	Did not vote	Voted	
0	30,2%	69,8%	100%
1	19,2%	80,8%	100%
2	18,1%	81,9%	100%
3	14,0%	86,0%	100%
4	10,3%	89,7%	100%
5	9,4%	90,6%	100%
6	8,9%	91,1%	100%
7	9,1%	90,9%	100%
8	8,7%	91,3%	100%
9	6,4%	93,6%	100%
10	17,7%	82,3%	100%
Total	13,0%	87,0%	100%
Pearson Chi²: value = 191.013; df = 10; Asymptotic Sign. (2-sided): 0,000***			

While Table 1 and the Chi² test confirms the association's existence, the degree and direction of the effect is not demonstrated. To further strengthen the reliability of the results by adding control variables and to produce models with comparable coefficients, multiple models of binomial logistic regression are built, where the dependent variable is *vote*, while the independent variable is *affective polarization*. The final model can be described by the formula of

$$\text{Log}\left(\text{Odds}\frac{\text{voted}}{\text{not voted}}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * \text{affective polarization} + \beta_2 * \text{controls}_{\text{partisan intensity}_i} +$$

$$+ \beta_3 * \text{control}_{\text{attention}_i} + \beta_4 * \text{control}_{\text{interest\_camp}_i} + \beta_5 * \text{controls}_{\text{demographics}} + \epsilon,$$

where *i* corresponds to the levels of categorical variables.

To assess overall model fit, I utilize Akaike's Inf. Criterion (AIC) – a maximum likelihood estimates which also accounts for overfitting – as well as on Nagelkerke's pseudo-R^2. While model 1 (Table 2) shows a 0.1483 pseudo-R^2 value, models 2 and 3 have 0.1955 and 0.1980 values, respectively, which indicates improved model fit compared to the baseline model only including β_0. The same conclusions can be reached via AIC values, where – compared to model 1's 3743.2 value – the most fitting model 3 shows a 3593.8 value, indicating a significantly better model fit.

The models' logistic regression coefficients mark the change in the log(odds) of voting, which standardizes positive and negative values and makes their strength of association comparable. In model 1 – which only controls for demographics – affective polarization's coefficient is 0.0135 (0.001457), which means that every unit change in affective polarization a 1.4% increase in the log(odds) of voting (over not voting) is observable. Once attention to politics and interest in campaigns are also controlled for (see model 2), the increase in log(odds) decreases to 1%. In the most fitting model – which also controls for partisan intensity – affective polarization has the coefficient of 0.0078, denoting a 0.8% increase in log(odds) of voting.

Overall, in alignment with the theoretical expectations, models show a positive relationship, which are statistically significant albeit rather weak in power (see Table 2). This relationship seems robust since controlling for demographics, attention to politics, interest in campaigns and intensity of partisanship does not decrease its effect substantially, and it remains statistically significant.

To make interpretation of these results more straightforward, the predicted probabilities of voting are plotted against affective polarization in Figure 4. Showing similar but even more pronounced effect as the analysis of Ward and Tavits (2019), predicted probabilities show that those with most polarized attitudes are predicted to vote at the rate of 94%, while those with the possible lowest value of affective polarization are predicted to vote at a 14% lower likelihood (Figure 4).

Table 2: *Effects of Affective Polarization on Turnout*

Binomial Logistic Regression model based on ANES 2020 Time Series Study data

Model	Dependent Variable: Voted in 2020 elections		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
affective polar	0.0135 *** (0.0015)	0.0097 *** (0.0015)	0.0078 *** (0.0017)
partisan int [1]			-
partisan int [2]			- 0.3267 ** (0.1158)
partisan int [3]			-0.2307 . (0.1220)
attention [1]		-	-
attention [2]		0.9745 ** (0.3748)	0.9790 ** (0.3762)
attention [3]		1.4468 *** (0.3807)	1.4451 *** (0.3821)
attention [4]		1.6404 *** (0.3809)	1.6320 *** (0.3823)
attention [5]		1.7408 *** (0.3982)	1.7191 *** (0.3996)
int_camp [1]		-	-
int_camp [2]		0.1385 (0.1249)	0.1197 (0.1252)
int_camp [3]		0.7824 *** (0.1537)	0.7332 *** (0.1547)
age	0.0219 *** (0.0021)	0.0169 *** (0.0022)	0.0166 *** (0.0022)
sex	0.0311 (0.0871)	0.1555 . (0.0900)	0.1533 . (0.0902)
edu1	-	-	-
edu2	0.7478 *** (0.1675)	0.7092 *** (0.1726)	0.6988 *** (0.1729)
edu3	1.5055 *** (0.1615)	1.4034 *** (0.1665)	1.4110 *** (0.1668)
edu4	2.2984 *** (0.1803)	2.1430 *** (0.1850)	2.1600 *** (0.1854)
edu5	2.3105 *** (0.1897)	2.0631 *** (0.1947)	2.0765 *** (0.1951)
(Intercept)	-1.1660 *** (0.1939)	-2.5414 *** (0.4108)	-2.2445 *** (0.4255)
Nagelkerke Pseudo Rsq	0.1483	0.1955	0.1980
Log Likelihood	-2048.7	-1785.0	-1780.9
Akaike's Inf. Crit.	3743.2	3598	3593.8
Observations	6185	6185	6185

Notes: *Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.'*
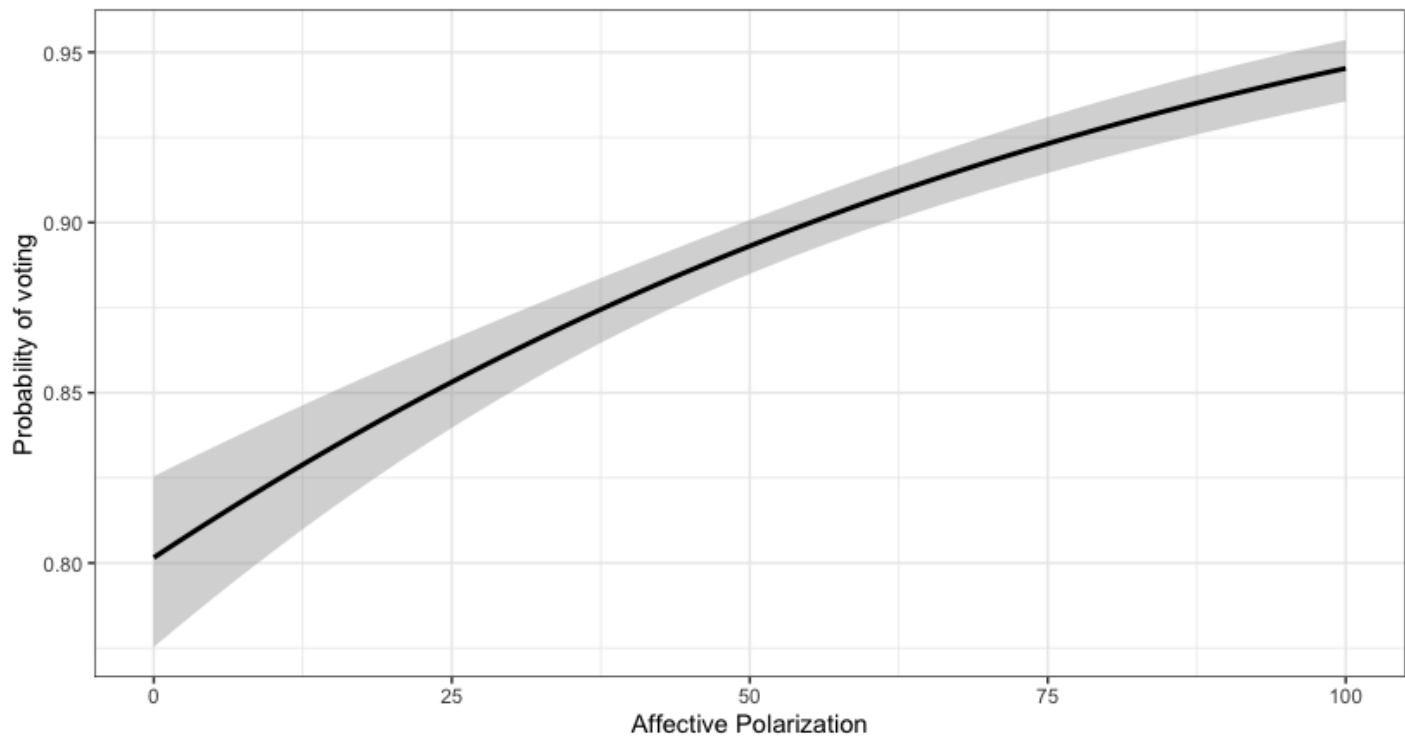
Figure 4: *Predicted Probabilities of Voting and Affective Polarization*
Author's work based on ANES 2020 Time Series Study data

While these results provide evidence regarding affective polarization's positive relationship to turnout, its effect on non-voting participation is yet to be explored. Ordered logit models are used to assess this effect, where the dependent variable is the previously described *non-voting participation* index, while all other variables are identical to the ones in prior binomial logistic models. Hence, the ordered logit model can be described by the formula

$$logit\ [P(nonvoting\ participation\ \leq J)] = \propto_j - \beta_1 * affectivepolarization\ +$$

$$+ \sum_{i=1}^{6} \beta_i control_i + \epsilon,$$

where α denotes the intercept for both cut-points, *j* corresponds to the level of an ordered category (j=1 to did not participate; j=2 to participated in one activity; j=3 to participated in two or more activities), and *i* to control variables.

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The models are shown in Table 3. Both Nagelkerke's pseudo-R^2 and AIC shows that model 6 has the best overall fit, with values of 0.1650 and -5825.406, respectively. While model 5's pseudo-R^2 value is 0.1611, which compared to the same value of model 4 (0.0803) is a significant improvement, this value only increases by 0.0049 in model 6. The two intercepts in the model are the result of the ordered method and correspond to the two unit-changes in the dependent variable.

Looking at the coefficients, all three models show a statistically significant positive relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Although the more controls entered to the model, the weaker the association's size, the direction of the association remains constant. In the most fitting model (6) affective polarization's coefficient is 0.008 (0.001), which means that for one unit increase on the scale of affective polarization the log odds of non-voting participation are expected to increase by 0.008, ceteris paribus.

Thus, in other words, as affective polarization increases, the odds of being in higher levels of non-voting participation increases. This tendency is visualized in Figure 5, which plots the predicted probabilities of non-voting participation for affective polarization. This figure shows that the larger the value of affective polarization, the probability of not participating in any actions (red) decreases, while the probability of participating in only one (green) or two or more (blue) forms increases. Furthermore, while for those who show the lowest possible level of affective polarization (0), are almost two times more likely to not participate in any actions than those who are on the highest possible level (100). Conversely, for the same respondents the probability of participating at least on one activity increases by 50%, while the probability of doing two or more activities almost triples.

Table 3: *Effects of Affective Polarization on Non-Voting Participation*
Ordered Logit Regression model based on ANES 2020 Time Series Study data

Model	Dependent Variable: Non-Voting Participation Index		
	(4)	(5)	(6)
affectivepol	0.014*** (0.001)	0.010*** (0.001)	0.008*** (0.001)
partisan int [1]			–
partisan int [2]			-0.342*** (0.071)
partisan int [3]			-0.192*** (0.069)
attention [1]		–	–
attention [2]		0.254 (0.465)	0.279 (0.467)
attention [3]		0.723. (0.464)	0.744 (0.466)
attention [4]		0.880* (0.463)	0.892* (0.465)
attention [5]		1.328*** (0.465)	1.333*** (0.467)
int_camp [1]		–	–
int_camp [2]		0.349*** (0.105)	-0.131* (0.068)
int_camp [3]		0.972*** (0.110)	0.463*** (0.055)
age	0.002* (0.001)	-0.005*** (0.001)	-0.006*** (0.001)
sex	0.041 (0.050)	0.184*** (0.052)	0.174*** (0.052)
edu1	–	–	–
edu2	0.073 (0.152)	0.020 (0.156)	0.005 (0.156)
edu3	0.539*** (0.142)	0.414*** (0.146)	0.416*** (0.146)
edu4	0.853*** (0.144)	0.661*** (0.148)	0.670*** (0.148)
edu5	1.142*** (0.145)	0.884*** (0.150)	0.888*** (0.150)
Intercept 0|1	1.659*** (0.160)	2.485*** (0.482)	2.666 (0.494)
Intercept 1|2	2.909*** (0.163)	3.816*** (0.483)	4.001 (0.495)
Nagelkerke's Pseudo Rsq	0.0803	0.1611	0.1650
Log Likelihood	-6079.034	-5837.479	-5825.406
Akaike's Inf. Crit.	12176.07	11704.96	11684.81
Observations	6139	6139	6139

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01*
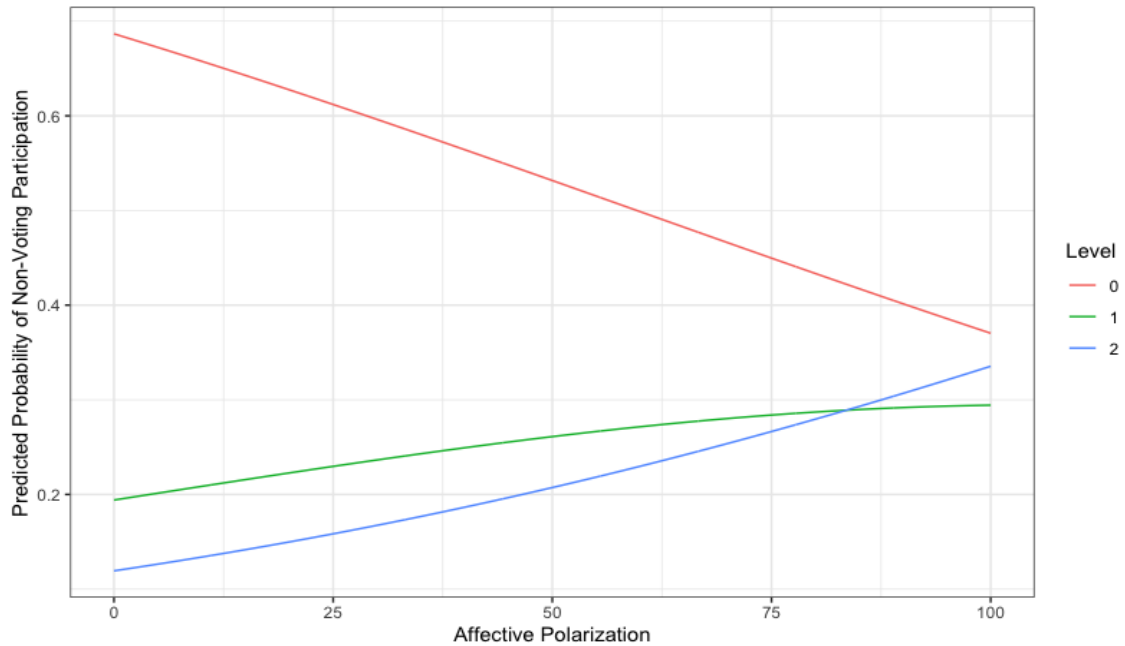
Figure 5: *Predicted Probabilities of Levels of Non-Voting Participation by Affective Polarization*
Based on ANES 2020; 'Level' corresponds to the level of Non-Voting Participation

Overall, the relationship of affective polarization shows the same pattern to both dimensions of political participation. While larger pseudo-R^2s are observable for voting than non-voting participation, the strength of the relationship – indicated by the coefficients – are almost identical. Yet, the main findings are that both examined relationships are statistically significant and positive. Therefore, presented results confirm H1 which claims that affective polarization is positively associated with political participation.

3.1.3. Partisan Affect and Political Participation

After having shown the positive relationship of affective polarization and political participation, I turn to examine H2, H3, and H4 which are focusing on affective polarizations' dimensions' effects on participation. Firstly, to show their individual effects on voting and non-voting participation, binomial logistic and ordered logit models are constructed. To see their individual effects separately,

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first in-party FT and out-party FT are entered separately, after which they are entered jointly to compare their effects. The binomial logistic model can be described by the formula of

$$Log\left(Odds\frac{voted}{not\ voted}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * inparty\ affect + \beta_2 * outparty\ affect +$$

$$+ \beta_3 * control_{partisan\_direction} + \beta_4 * controls_{demographics} + \epsilon\ ,$$

where independent variables are in-party affect and out-party affect, and which is controlled by the directional component of partisanship and demographic variables used in previous models, namely age, sex, and education. The output of the model is shown in Table 4.

The first model only includes the in-party variable, which shows statistical significance on the highest level, with the coefficient of 0.0095 (0.0022). This coefficient means that by one unit of increase in the in-party Feeling Thermometer the log(odds) of voting increases by 0.0095. In other words, this model suggests that in-party affect is positively affiliated with voting participation. The second model only includes the out-party variable, which has a corresponding statistically significant coefficient of -0.0176 (0.0019), implying a negative association between out-party affect and voting participation. Therefore, the more negative feelings about the out-party are associated with higher odds of voting.

Table 4: *Effects of In-Party and Out-Party Affect on Turnout*
Binomial Logistic Regression Model based on ANES 2020 Time Series Study data

Model	Dependent Variable: Voted in 2020 elections		
	(7)	(8)	(9)
inpartyft	0.0095*** (0.0022)		0.0037 (0.0023)
outpartyft		-0.0176 *** (0.0019)	-0.0166 *** (0.0020)
Democrat	–	–	–
Republican	-0.2816 ** (0.0872)	-0.3182 *** (0.0880)	-0.3197 *** (0.0879)
age	0.0231 *** (0.0020)	0.0231 *** (0.0020)	0.0229 *** (0.0020)
sex	-0.0160 *** (0.0872)	0.0524 (0.0878)	0.0382 (0.0882)
edu1	–	–	–
edu2	0.7927 *** (0.1654)	0.7124 *** (0.1680)	0.7238 *** (0.1683)
edu3	1.5666 *** (0.1601)	1.4356 *** (0.1622)	1.4584 *** (0.1629)
edu4	2.3222 *** (0.1796)	2.1484 *** (0.1805)	2.1871 *** (0.1823)
edu5	2.3377 *** (0.1894)	2.1208 *** (0.1902)	2.1644 *** (0.1924)
(Intercept)	-1.0825 *** (0.2406)	0.0908 (0.1941)	-0.2053 (0.2681)
Nagelkerke's Pseudo Rsq	0.1303	0.1502	0.1510
Log Likelihood	-1893.1	-1860.4	-1859.2
Akaike's Inf. Crit.	3738.8	3738.8	3738.3

Notes: *Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.'*

To visualize these tendencies, Figure 6 presents the predicted probabilities of voting for both in-party and out-party affect broken down by parties. While minor differences are observable between parties, they show the same effect. Note, that – as shown in Figure 2 plot A and B – respondents' distribution across the FT scale is skewed, and there are only few who feel cold about their in-party, or who feel warm regarding their out-party, hence the greater Standard Errors on graph E and F.
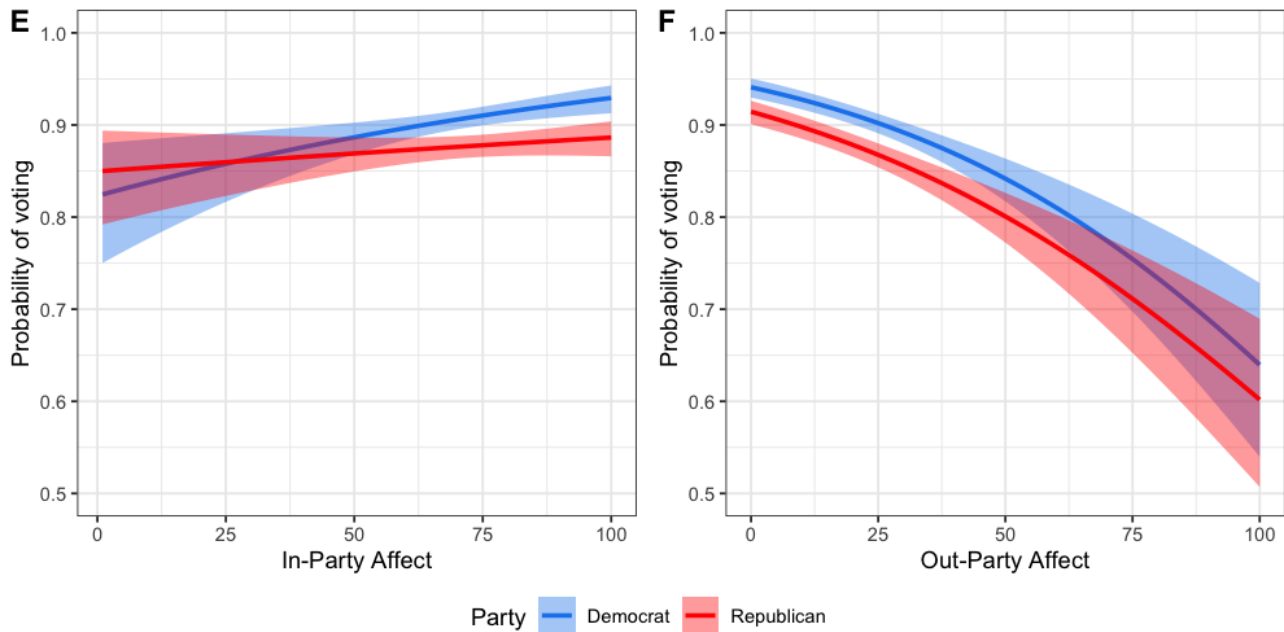
Figure 6: *Predicted Probabilities of Voting by Out-Party and In-Party Affect*
Based on ANES 2020 Time Series Study

Model 9 in Table 4, which includes both independent variables, adds further strength to these findings. While in-party affect sill shows the same direction as in model (7), it is no longer significant. Conversely, out-party affect does not only keep its significance but also barely loses its degree of strength (–0.0166 (0.0020)).

However, Wald's test including independent variables (the Chi-squared test statistic of 91.7, with two degrees of freedom and a p-value (0.000)) indicates that the overall effect of in-party and out-party Feeling Thermometer is statistically significant. These models provide evidence that the effect of negative party evaluations on voting are stronger (larger in absolute terms) than the effect of in-party evaluations (see model 7 and 8). This relationship still holds when they are in the same equation (model 9). Furthermore, the difference between these coefficients in model (9) is also confirmed by

Wald test's chi-squared statistic (Chi^2 = 64.8; df = 1; p(> chi^2) = 0.000),[10] which shows that their effect size is significantly different.

While the Wald test already allows us to reject the null hypothesis of H4 which says that there is no difference in their effects, the consistent differences in their coefficients and models' pseudo-R^2 values strengthen this finding and suggest the dominance of out-party affect: while the pseudo-R^2 value of model (8) is 0.1502, model (7)'s is only 0.1303. Similarly, the explanatory power of model (8) only increases by 0.0008 pseudo-R^2 once in-party is added to the model (see model 9).

To measure the effect of in-party and out-party affect on non-voting participation, additional ordered logit models are created, which can be described by the formula of

$$logit \; [P(nonvoting \; participation \; \leq \; y)] = \propto_j - \beta_1 * inpartyaffect \; +$$
$$+ \; \beta_2 * outpartyaffect \; + \; \sum_{k=1}^{6} \beta_k control_k \; + \; \epsilon \, ,$$

where y corresponds to the level of a non-voting participation category (y=1 for did not participate; y=2 for participated in one activity; y=3 for participated in two or more), and k to control variables which are – correspondingly to the former model – partisan direction, age, sex, and level of education.

The output of the model is demonstrated in Table 5. In regard to overall fit, the best fitting model is the one that includes both in-party and out-party affect (pseudo R^2=0.1126). However, it is only a significant improvement in comparison to the model with in-party affect (pseudo R^2=0.0656) and not compared to the one with out-party affect (pseudo R^2=0.1114). In other words, in-party evaluation does not contribute explained variation once added to out-party affect.

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[10] Calculated by comparing the two coefficients and excluding all others from the equation.

Although independent variables are statistically significant in all three models on the highest level, their strength further contributes to the evidence suggesting the primacy of out-party affect, echoing the same findings for non-voting participation as for voting. The coefficients of in-party affect (0.01) and out-party affect (-0.023) show to the same direction in model (10) and (11). Once they are put into the same model, their level of significance and direction remain the same, but in-party affect drops to its half in strength (0.004), while out-party affect only decreases slightly (-0.022).

Table 5: *Effects of In-Party and Out-Party Affect on Non-Voting Participation*
Ordered Logit Regression Model based on ANES 2020 Time Series Study data

Model	Dependent variable: Non-Voting Participation		
	(10)	(11)	(12)
inpartyft	0.010*** (0.001)		0.004*** (0.001)
outpartyft		-0.023*** (0.001)	-0.022*** (0.001)
Democrat	–	–	–
Republican	-0.533*** (0.050)	-0.583***(0.051)	-0.585*** (0.051)
age	0.005*** (0.001)	0.004*** (0.001)	0.004*** (0.001)
sex	-0.029 (0.050)	0.052 (0.050)	0.036 (0.051)
edu1	–	–	–
edu2	0.145 (0.151)	0.071 (0.154)	0.081 (0.154)
edu3	0.625*** (0.141)	0.486*** (0.144)	0.509*** (0.145)
edu4	0.870*** (0.143)	0.701*** (0.146)	0.736*** (0.146)
edu5	1.130*** (0.145)	0.927*** (0.147)	0.966*** (0.148)
Intercept 0|1	1.462*** (0.181)	0.1765 (0.160)	0.4557 (0.193)
Intercept 1|2	2.701*** (0.183)	1.4576*** (0.161)	1.7379 (0.194)
Nagelkerke Pseudo Rsq	0.0656	0.1114	0.1126
Log Likelihood	-6121.04	-5988.26	-5984.91
Akaike's Inf. Crit.	12262.08	11996.52	11991.82
Observations	6139	6139	6139

Note: *Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.'*

To present these results more intuitively, predicted probabilities of the level of non-voting participatory action are estimated for both in-party and out-party affect (see Figure 7). Correspondingly to the conclusion reached by looking at the coefficients, plot 'G' shows a positive association of the two variables (as in-party affect increases, the probability of participating in more forms increases), while plot 'H' shows a negative association (as out-party affect increases, the probability of participating in more forms decreases). This graph also highlights the marginal effect differences between the categories of the ordered non-voting participation variable: while non-participation shows a different direction and steepness, the two other levels are not so distant from each other and follow the same trend.
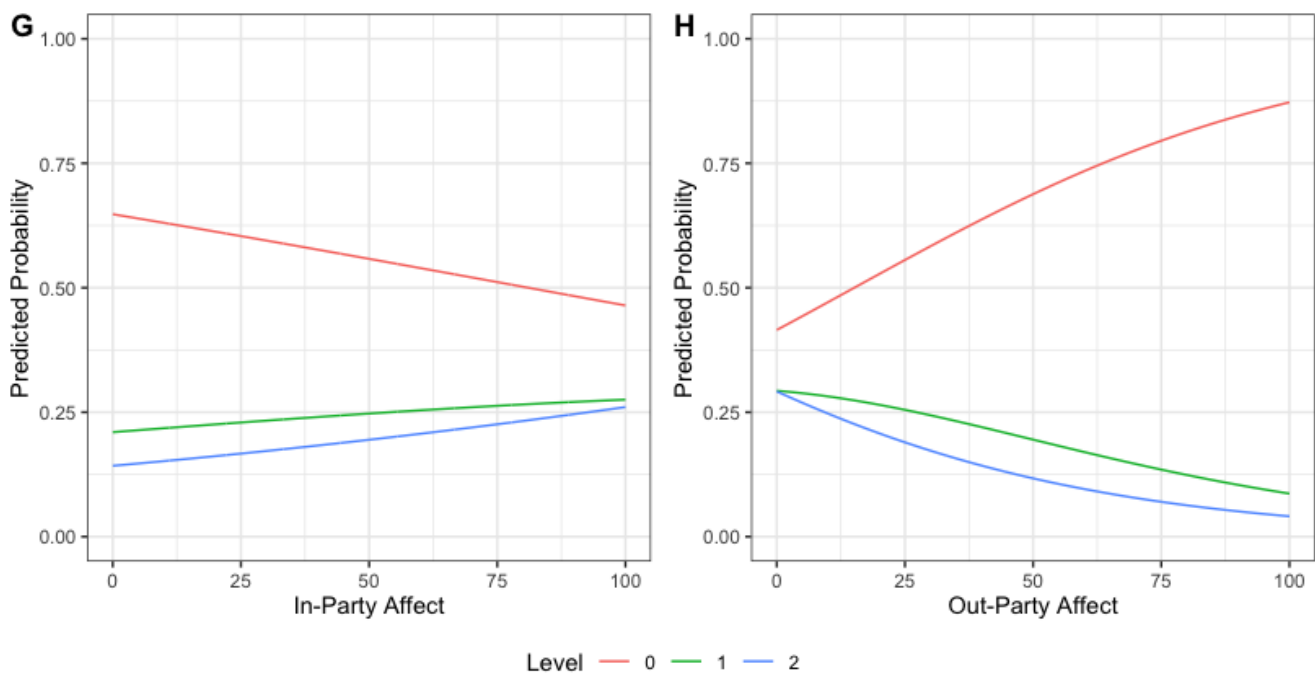
Figure 7: *Predicted Probabilities of Non-Voting Participation by Partisan Affect*
Based on ANES 2020; 'Level' corresponds to the level of Non-Voting Participation

To summarize the findings concerning the effect of in-party and out-party affect on voting and non-voting participation, results univocally indicate that in-party affect is positively associated with

both turnout and non-voting participation, while out-party affect is negatively associated with these dimensions. Hence, the presented evidence confirms both H2 and H3.

In addition, results confirm that the effect and explanatory power of out-party affect is greater than that of in-party affect for both dimensions of political participation, which calls for the acceptance of H4 regarding the pervasiveness of negativity – in other words, the relative strength of negative out-party evaluations over positive in-party evaluations. In addition, the fact that the same dominance was observed for both dimensions makes these findings more robust.

3.2. Discussion

Descriptive analysis shows that by 2020 affective polarization has reached a record high value since 1980 as a consequence of an unprecedented increase since 2016, while mean out-party evaluations have never been this low for both Democrats and Republicans. Similarly, Feeling Thermometer distributions show that out-party evaluations are more skewed towards the negatives than in-party evaluations to the positives for both parties. These results align with the claims of Lelkes (2016) and Iyengar et al. (2019), according to which changes in aggregate affective polarization are driven by decreasing out-party evaluations, and highlight the importance of this research.

Confirming theoretical expectations, the empirical analysis suggests that affective polarization is positively related to both voting and non-voting participation. The relationship remains positive and statistically significant after controlling for demographics, attention to politics, interest in campaigns and partisanship's intensity component. Predicted probabilities of voting show that there is a 14% difference in likelihood of voting between those who are on the minimum and who are on the maximum of the affective polarization scale. This result is in alignment with earlier findings of Ward and Tavits (2019) who – in their cross-country analysis – show that those who are more affectively polarized are more likely to vote, and of the findings of Harteveld and Wagner (forthcoming) who

demonstrate the same effect in the Netherlands, Germany and Spain using a longitudinal design. Yet, it contradicts the theoretical possibility outlined by Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995) that affective polarization may turn off voters and depresses participation.

Besides providing reaffirming evidence from the United States to the mobilization hypothesis, this analysis shows that affective polarization has largely the same effect on non-voting participation as to turnout. Therefore, results show that it is indeed overall engagement, and not only a particular form of participation – like voting – which is affected.

Yet, the primary focus of this thesis is to disentangle the effects of affective polarization's dimensions. Results show that in-party affect is positively, and out-party affect is negatively associated with both voting and non-voting participation. In other words, the warmer one feels about their party, or the colder they feel about the other party, the more likely that they will participate in politics. By the same token, the direction of these effects also confirms the first finding: for one unit of increase in in-party affect or decrease in out-party affect both increases affective polarization by one unit, and both units of increases have a corresponding positive effect on participation.

While these claims regarding the direction of the effect seem trivial – since it would be very surprising to find the opposite – the novelty of the findings lie in the relative strength of the effect and the power of these variables: when these effects are compared, all results indicate that out-party affect has a much stronger effect and power on participation than in-party affect. These results are reinforcing the verdict of Iyengar and Krupenkin (2018) who demonstrate that negative motivations to participate are stronger than positive ones. Their analysis suggests that "by 2016 negativity had replaced positivity as the main driver of political participation" (2018, 213) in the United States, which has been a steady change from 1980. These conclusions confirm that out-party evaluation's dominance continues to exist. Yet, what Iyengar and Krupenkin (2018) could not show – since they only looked at partisan affect – is the relation of these to affective polarization.

While the first part of the analysis showed that affective polarization – which only accounts for the differences of evaluations, not their actual value – is associated with participation, the second part – and the heavily asymmetrical relation of dimensions – suggest that the value of partisan affect matters unevenly. In other words, one unit decrease on the scale of out-party affect has a much larger corresponding effect on participation than for one unit increase in in-party affect (4.5 times larger for voting, and 5.5 times larger for non-voting participation), regardless of the fact that the difference of the values (affective polarization) in both cases increased to the same extent.

In a bit less technical terms, this thesis concludes that although affective polarization is positively associated with participation, if affective polarization increases because of worsening negative attitudes towards the out-party, its effects will be bigger than if positive attitudes towards one's own party would increase. Therefore, it is not only the magnitude of affective polarization which determines its effect on political participation, but also its direction,[11] which has far-reaching implications on voting behavior, electoral politics, campaigning and – on the most general level – democracy.

One of the implications of these findings is that, firstly, intergroup conflict indeed incentivizes participation in politics. On a broader level, although affective polarization increases participation, it also inherently breeds interparty hostility leading to tribalism, unbridgeable antagonisms, lack of bipartisanship and agreement, which may be unfavorable to the democratic process. As Harteveld and Wagner wrote, "affective polarization can be seen as the oxygen of democracy: while it is needed to keep democracy breathing, an excess can make everything go up in flames" (forthcoming, para. 2). As the events taking place after the 2020 Presidential Elections – like storming the Capitol – signify, these

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[11] The reader would be right to point out that the difference of two values does not have a direction. Here, direction stands for the predominance of one dimension over the other.

flames are not only hypothetical. At the crescendo of political conflict in a polarized climate even a small event can elicit anti-democratic and violent acts.

Secondly, the asymmetry of in-party and out-party affect implies that this heightened sense of conflict and competition will not be driven by support for one's party or group – as political science generally assumes – as much as by hostility towards the out-group. While the direct implications on affective polarization literature were already discussed, these results have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, while SIT assumes that it is the distinctiveness of in-group from out-group which has motivational power and involves people in group-conflicts, these results rather point at the claim that it is rather disdain that drives behavior. While the presented evidence is insufficient to substantiate any claims regarding the critique of SIT, it still questions whether the assumed mechanism is as described, or whether it is also subject to change. Furthermore, results showing the motivational importance of negative out-party affect have indirect implications on literature discussing negative advertising: the claim of Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995) that negative advertisement may depress voting may be contradicted by the finding that negative out-party affect increases likelihood of participation. Yet, if partisans are targeted by the negative ad about their in-party due to which their in-party evaluation decreases, the assertion of Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995) would still stand. However, without claiming that these results are universally applicable, they raise theoretical questions which merit further research.

On a practical note, if motivational underpinnings of voting behavior are predominantly negative, the composition of the voting population would change and be comprised more of rejectionist voters rather than voters who are affirmative, which may transform politics. Similarly, politicians aspiring to mobilize voters should care more about getting dirt on the other rather than enacting or promising favorable policies, which would have grave consequences on elections, campaigns and democratic procedures.

3.3. Limitations

However, akin to all research, this analysis is not without limitations. First and foremost, while one cannot dismiss the possibility that the assumed mechanisms are not in place, this design does not allow for having claims of any causality, only of correlation. Consequently, the presented theoretical chapter has outlined many mechanisms for both possible outcomes regarding the different effects of dimensions, yet the conducted analysis is not suited to explain which of these mechanisms are responsible for the presented effect. While available data and secondary data analysis does not allow for causal inference, this limitation could be addressed by building an experimental design.

The second most important limitation which puts constraints on the inference from these findings is that – as Harteveld and Wagner point out – "the relation between polarization and turnout might be reciprocal, [since] (…) as people's engagement with politics increases, so might the extent to which they loathe their opponents" (forthcoming). Although the analysis of Harteveld and Wagner show that albeit being reciprocal, a "sizeable independent effect exists of affective polarization on turnout" (forthcoming), this limitation could be addressed by further studies by using time-series data.

Thirdly, the scope of this analysis is limited to the United States and hence, two-party systems. While the expansion of the spatial scope would inevitably involve intricacies due to the need to reconcile different party-systems, which may also demand a different theoretical framework, further research could investigate how far these findings travel.

Fourth, the data used for the analysis also have multiple limitations. Firstly, due to the Covid-pandemic the usual ANES data collection could not be applied, and an alternative (mostly online) method was used. The implications of this to data quality are unknown. Secondly, independent variables are measured on the Feeling Thermometer scale, which – as argued by many (see Bankert 2020; Lelkes 2016; Wagner 2021) – suffers from differential item functioning. Although alternative measurements of identification were offered by Bankert (2020), other issues such as social desirability

bias and low data availability are present. Thirdly, the dependent variable of voting is subject to overreporting (Matsusaka and Palda 1999), which may inflate the number of those who actually voted: while the survey value of *voted* is 86.1%, the census value of turnout (VEP) is 66.2%. This is a common limitation which is not only present in this thesis, yet it should be considered when interpreting the results. Since all data-collection exercises were affected by the pandemic, these possible limitations are not unique to ANES but affected any other data-source.

3.4. Further Research

As follows from the conducted analyses, further research areas include the testing of the outlined mechanisms, the extension the scope conditions such as the examination whether findings hold in the European context as well, exploration alternative explanations, explanation under which conditions these findings stand or change, and the addition of further theoretical layers. To add further credence to these conclusions, future studies could use longitudinal data to measure the change in affective polarization and partisan affect, and to estimate its effect on participation. Studies building on these findings could also assess the mediating role of the salience of political and social identities and explain why it is the case that out-party affect shows a stronger relationship than in-party affect when – as Greene (2004) claims – in-group favoritism contributes more to self-identity. Furthermore, an additional differentiation between the dimensions of non-voting participation could be the next step, as the quality of engagement and participation may be different for donation (which is an expression of support) and a protest march (which is arguably a rejectionist action). Showing that these activities differ along the lines of those who are overall more positive and negative could have further contributions to this field. Lastly, the alternative explanation that the effect is observable not because of the extreme evaluations but because of high overall emotional investment calls for further scholarly investigation.

While extensive intellectual effort was invested in exploring what leads to affective polarization, only few publications have addressed its possible consequences. This thesis was dedicated to exploring affective polarization's political behavioral consequences, specifically its relationship to political participation. The puzzle whether affective polarization leads to increased or decreased participation was addressed and was further explicated by separating the effect of affective polarization's dimensions, namely in-party and out-party affect. Theorizing these dimensions' asymmetric relationship allowed for a more in-depth analysis which account not only for the dimensions' values' absolute difference, but also for these evaluation's actual Feeling Thermometer value. This thesis took a correlational approach and looked at the 2020 Presidential Election in the United States by relying on ANES data.

Results show that firstly, affective polarization is positively associated with political participation, which confirms the mobilization hypothesis. These results align with the findings of Harteveld and Wagner (forthcoming) and Ward and Tavits (2019), yet, provide further evidence by demonstrating the effect not only on voting, but also on non-voting participation. Secondly, the analysis confirms that the effect of in-party and out-party affect are asymmetric as (negative) out-party evaluations are dominant. These results – by expanding the temporal scope – contribute to the findings of Iyengar and Krupenkin (2018), who claimed that as a result of a changing trend in partisan affect, out-party evaluations became dominant in their effect on participation.

Yet, the most significant novelty of the findings lies in these results' conjoint interpretation. While affective polarization shows a positive association to participation, in-party and out-party affect contribute to this effect differently. Thus, while decrease in out-party evaluations or increase in in-party evaluations both increase affective polarization, the former will lead to higher likelihood of

participation. Consequently, the extent to which affective polarization leads to participation is dependent not only on its magnitude – as was hitherto assumed by literature – but also on the overall value of partisan affect.

All in all, the presented findings may have broad implications on electoral behavior, political communication, campaigning, elections, as well as on democracy. Findings suggesting that people with more polarized attitudes are more prone to participate, which may lead to further polarization, tribalism, and lack of agreement. These antagonisms might jeopardize the dialogue between political groups and could lead to the categorical rejection of the other, making mutually beneficial compromises impossible. Furthermore, the finding that voters' motivation to participate in political processes stems more from out-group animosity than in-group favoritism may also imply similar tendencies.

These results point at further unanswered questions. Future research should focus on causally testing the outlined mechanisms, on showing conditions that determine which dimension's effect is more pronounced, on reproducing these results by using time-series data where change in variables can be used as a predictor of change of effect, and on further differentiating between non-voting participatory actions. Furthermore, these findings call for the reconceptualization of affective polarization.
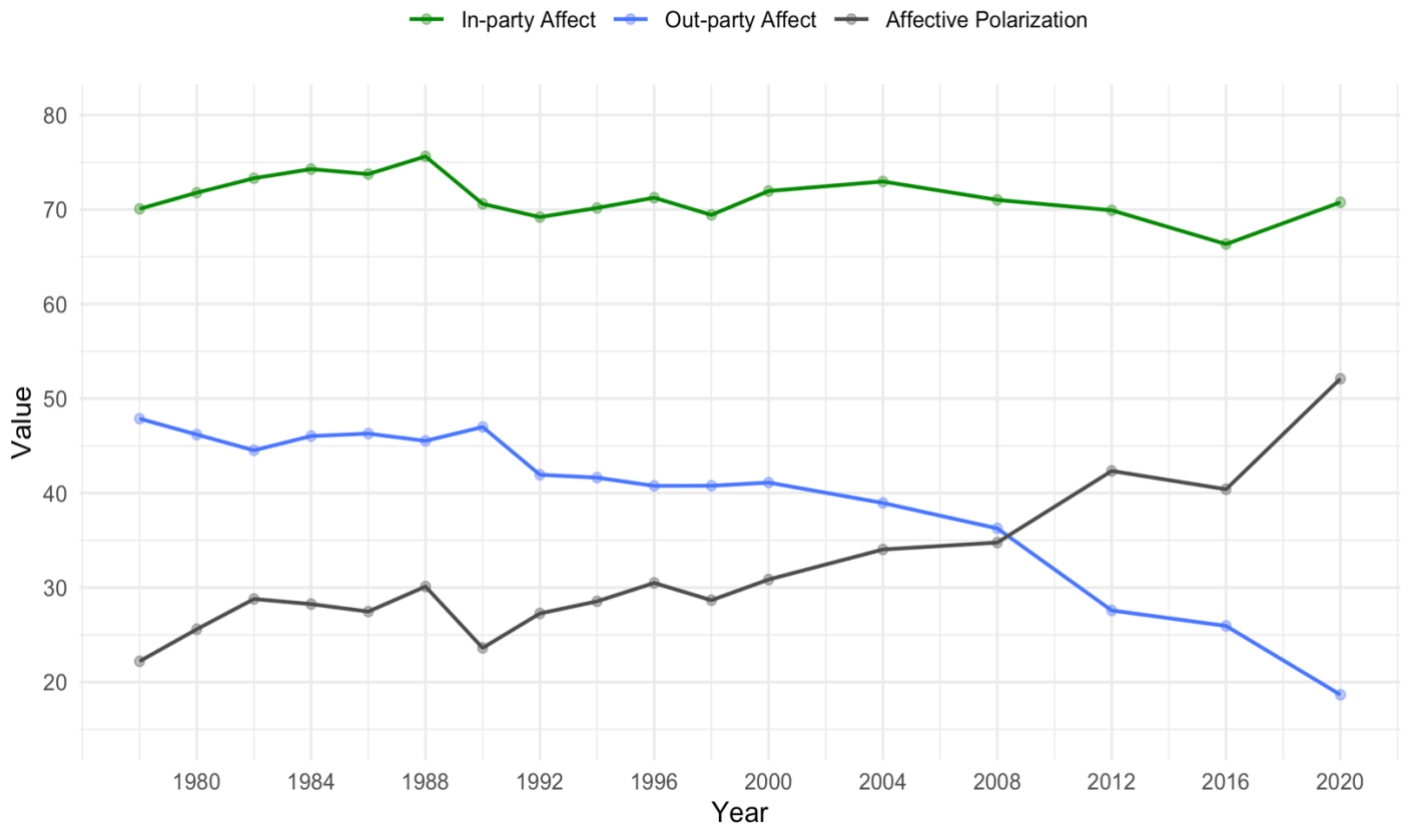
Figure A1 - *Trend of Affective Polarization and Partisan Affect in the US in election years*
Author's work, data from ANES Time Series Cumulative Data (in election years) augmented with ANES 2020
Time Series Study data

Table A1: *Description of Variables from ANES 2020 Timeseries Dataset*

	Name of Variable	Description	Level of measurement
Dependents	Voted	Voter turnout in 2020	Nominal; Did not vote (0) – Voted (1)
	Non-voting participation	Non-Voting Participation Index from 4 variables: sticker, petition, protest, donate	Ordinal; Did not participate at all (0) – Participated in one (1) – Participated in two or more forms (2)
	Sticker	Did you wear a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on your car, or place a sign in your window or in front of your house?	Nominal; No (0) – Yes (1)
	Petition	During the past 12 months, have you signed a petition on the Internet or on paper about a political or social issue, or have you not done this in the past 12 months?	Nominal; No (0) – Yes (1)
	Protest	During the past 12 months, have you joined in a protest march, rally, or demonstration, or have you not done this in the past 12 months?	Nominal; No (0) – Yes (1)
	Donate	Did you contribute money to individual candidate running for public office? OR Did you give money to a political party during this election year?	Nominal; No (0) – Yes (1)
Independents	Inparty FT	Party Feeling Thermometer of Party which R identifies with based on partisanship scale	Ratio Scale; Cold (0) – Warm (100)
	Outparty FT	Party Feeling Thermometer of Party which R identifies with based on partisanship scale	Ratio Scale; Cold (0) – Warm (100)
	Affective polarization	Absolute difference of Inparty FT and Outparty FT	Ratio Scale; Non-polarized (0) – Extremely polarized (100)
	candidate_Biden FT	Candidate Feeling Thermometer of Party which R identifies with based on partisanship scale	Ratio Scale; Cold (0) – Warm (100)
	candidate_Trump FT	Candidate Feeling Thermometer of Party which R identifies with based on partisanship scale	Ratio Scale; Cold (0) – Warm (100)
Controls	Sex	What is your sex?	Nominal; Male (0) – Female (1)
	age	Respondent's age	Scale; 18 – 79 (value)
	Edu5	Respondent's 5 level category of education	Ordinal; Less than high school credential (1) – High school credential (2) –Some post-high school, no bachelor's degree – (3)Bachelor's degree (4) – Graduate degree (5)

Interest in campaigns	Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you? Would you say that you have been very much interested, somewhat interested or not much interested in the political campaigns so far this year?	Ordinal; Very much interested (1) – Somewhat interested (2) – Not much interested (3)
Attention to elections	How often do you pay attention to what's going on in government and politics?	Ordinal; Never (1) – Some of the time (2) – About half the time (3) – Most of the time (4) – Always (5)
Partisan intensity	Deviation from 4 on 7-scale Partisanship ID	Ordinal; Leaner (1)–Somewhat strong partisan (2)–Strong partisan (3)
Partisan direction	Direction of Partisanship ID (excluding true independents)	Nominal; Democrat (0)– Republican (1)

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